

Kingdom Hearts: 358/2 Days - Volume 02

Table of Contents

1. [Character Introductions and Prologue](#)
2. [Chapter 1: Your Keyblade](#)
3. [Chapter 2: Vacation](#)
4. [Chapter 3: Battle against Riku](#)
5. [Chapter 4: Wrong Switch](#)
6. [Chapter 5: Sleeping Xion](#)
7. [Chapter 6: Tell a Lie](#)

Character Introductions and Prologue

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Vol. 2: Go to the Sea

xxx

Characters

Roxas

The protagonist of this story. Number XIII of the Organisation. He who has lost his memories and his heart, He spends each day feeling doubts about his own self, having lost his memories and his heart, and various things in the world surrounding him. His friendships with Axel and Xion act as support as they carry out missions every day, but as he helps Xion, who falls into a severe condition, something unusual begins to happen to his own body, too.

Riku

Sora's best friend. Entrusting Sora, who has been put into a sleep in order to put back his scattered memories, to Naminé, posing as an Organisation member, he investigates their goals.

Axel

Number VIII of the Organisation. He had been working with Saïx within the Organisation, the two sharing a common goal. However, as he spends time with Roxas and Xion, their exchanges deepen, and friendship begins to grow. Their fun days together had continued, but it's not long before a certain thing will lead

him to begin to harbour doubts about Xion's existence.

Xion

A girl who appears as the 14th Member of Organisation XIII, having joined after Roxas. Close to Axel and Roxas, it was routine to spend the time eating sea salt ice cream with them after their mission every day. However, unusual things have begun to happen to her body and her memories, and this will lead her destiny to change drastically.

Xemnas

The leader of the Organisation, and Xehanort's nobody. He is a figure of absolute power within the Organisation. It's like he can see through everything that is happening to Roxas and Xion, and is indifferent.

Xigbar

Number II of the Organisation, who wields gun arrows. Usually he is a tease, calling Roxas 'kiddo' and Xion 'poppet'. However, he is very well informed about various things and occasionally a shrewd side of him peeks out.

Saïx

Number VII, who serves as adjutant of the Organisation. Sharing a common goal with Axel, their relationship is that of comrades. For that or whatever reason, he acts as informant to Axel, and gives him what sounds like cautionary advice.

Beast

A prince who was turned into a beast by a witch's curse. Protecting something important, he battles the Heartless in Beast's Castle.

Hook

The leader of the pirates, and the enemy of Peter Pan and Tinkerbell. Having found many treasure maps, he has been ordering his subordinate Smee to dig all over Neverland.

Philoctetes

Foster parent of Hercules. He thinks that Roxas, who comes to Olympus

Coliseum, is applying to be his pupil, and tries to begin training him.

xxx

Summoned before her mission for the day, she faced a place she'd never set foot in before. The chilly air brushed her cheeks. She was on a balcony that seemed to be floating in the air.

Xemnas stood in the centre of it.

She had been nervous, thinking perhaps Saïx had found out that she had become unable to use the Keyblade and summoned her, but it seemed as if that was not the case.

I'm not the only one who was summoned. Everyone is standing here around Xemnas.

"The time is ripe... the great heart has at last appeared before us," Xemnas began, spreading both arms to the pitch-black sky.

Floating slowly up there is... a heart-shaped moon...? That's... Kingdom Hearts?

"Rage... hatred... sadness, and happiness. All gathered together are the fruits of the heart... that is Kingdom Hearts. The world will begin to reform from now."

It feels like that light radiating from Kingdom Hearts is only shining on me.

"Gentlemen! In order to gain more power, and, in order to have hearts of our own... All gathered together, we Nobodies must not forget our goal. To gather hearts, to have hearts of our own, to not let the heart mislead us."

I don't really understand what Xemnas' words mean. To gather hearts, to have hearts of our own, to not let the heart mislead us.... What on earth does that mean?

The light pouring from Kingdom Hearts is very pretty, and I feel that the meaning of Xemnas' words doesn't really matter.

Hearts... an aggregation of hearts.

If I had a heart...

Xion quietly looked up at Kingdom Hearts.

Continue to [Chapter 1: Your Keyblade](#)

Chapter 1: Your Keyblade

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

After Xemnas' speech, it was back to the usual routine for the day. The one difference was that now, Kingdom Hearts could be seen through the large windows in the lobby; a heart-shaped moon, floating in the pitch-black sky. Xion moved closer to the window unconsciously, gazing up at Kingdom Hearts.

Such a weird feeling... like a fluttering in my chest. So, the hearts that Roxas and I collect end up like that, do they...

"You have been placed in a mission with Roxas again, today. It's Agrabah. Ask Roxas for the details." Saïx was standing there.

"...Thank you," she said, after a moment of hesitation. But Saïx only glanced back at her before returning to his usual place.

I don't know what Saïx is thinking. But, it's better to be ignored if it means he'll let me work alongside Roxas. That's all I need. I still can't use the Keyblade. Maybe I'll never be able to use it again. Then...

What should I... what should I do?

Lifting her face to the pitch-black sky, she gazed up at Kingdom Hearts once again. Again, someone called out.

"Morning, Xion." It was Roxas.

"Morning... Roxas. Let's do our best today, okay?"

"Yeah," Roxas replied, and for some reason, the fluttering in her chest subsided just a little.

“Have you heard the mission details?”

“Heartless extermination in Agrabah. Let’s hurry up and get it over with.”

“Yeah.”

Xion and Roxas stepped into a dark corridor.

xxx

Finishing the mission, Xion and Roxas headed for the usual spot; the Twilight Town clock tower. Axel, who had finished his mission before them, was already eating ice cream there.

“You’re early, Axel.”

Axel turned and grinned. “You guys are just late.” Roxas and Xion sat down beside him. “So, today went well, I gather?”

“Of course. Where did you go, Axel?”

“Beast’s Castle. I went to check something out in that gloomy castle. How about you guys?”

“We went to Agrabah, for heart collection. Just like every mission.”

To the side of Roxas and Axel’s exchange, Xion sat staring at the ice cream in her hand.

Why... do I suddenly feel more worried?

“What’s wrong, Xion?” It was Axel who had noticed, peering into Xion’s face.

“Soon... the other members are going to find out that I can’t use the Keyblade, aren’t they...” said Xion, head down.

“We told you, it will be okay,” said Roxas, peering into her face too this time.

But Axel turned his gaze away, and said, “Well... those guys are tough customers.”

I know. I know it’s not that easy. “It’d be nice if everything was okay...” whispered Xion, taking a bite of her ice cream.

After a moment of silence, Roxas spoke. “I dunno about Saïx and Xigbar... but Demyx for example wouldn’t figure it out, would he?”

At his serious tone, Xion huffed unconsciously. *That doesn't solve anything... but it's probably true in any case.* She fought laughter.

"Hey, don't you say nasty things like that," said Axel from beside Xion, scratching his head.

"But it's true, right? All he does is play his sitar all the time," said Roxas.

It seemed as if Roxas was staying completely serious. *How hilarious!*

"I don't think that means anything... he has his own job that he... huh? What does he do, anyway," wondered Axel, tilting his head.

When I think about it... Xion opened her mouth. "I've seen him playing his sitar out on some world before."

"Doing what?" Roxas tilted his head.

"Exterminating Heartless, investigating worlds, no different to us, I'd expect," said Axel, and Roxas looked deep in thought.

"He said he's no good at fighting.... Us members of the Organisations are all Nobodies, but we all have different strengths, don't we," said Roxas, in a quiet voice.

Now that I think about it, that's right. We're all Nobodies, but just like humans, from the shapes of our bodies to the types of our personalities, we're different.

"Yep. It's called individuality."

"Even though we Nobodies don't have hearts?" Xion asked Axel.

"Just because none of us have hearts doesn't mean we're all the same. We have our memories from when we were human too, yanno."

Axel had said a word she hadn't heard before. "Memories?" Xion asked.

"You mean you have those?" Roxas added.

Memories from when we were human? What does that mean?

The question seemed to surprise Axel. "See, Nobodies like those that become Organisation members are special, cause for us... we carry most of the memories from when we were human."

"I don't," Roxas replied.

"Me neither." Xion and Roxas hung their heads.

That's the first I've heard of that.

Scratching his head, Axel took a small breath and said, "That's because of the special Nobodies, you two are even more special."

I don't really get it. What does it mean, to be a special Nobody? Xion didn't lift her head.

From beside her, Roxas asked, "What kind of human were you, Axel?" At that question, Xion looked up too, and stared at Axel.

He shrugged, looking awkward. "Me... Me? Uhh... I don't think I was really all that different."

"I'm jealous. I wish I could remember that kind of stuff," said Roxas, and Xion nodded.

I don't have that kind of thing... I'm jealous of Axel.

"Really? It's only baggage."

But, Axel speaks of having memories as if it is a bad thing. I wonder... is it really?

"I don't even have memories from when I was first born as a Nobody..." Roxas cast his eyes down.

I'm the same. I don't remember much at all.

"That's just cause you're always zoning out," said Axel, starting to joke around.

"You're terrible!" replied Roxas. For a moment, the dark atmosphere was blown away.

But...

"I don't really remember much either," Xion said.

"You two have a lot in common," said Axel.

"I wonder what kind of guy I was..." Roxas seemed lost in thought.

I wonder what on earth we were like as humans? And why do we have no

memories?

The setting sun shone down on the three on the clock tower.

xxx

At the same time... on the outskirts of Twilight Town, two figures stood before the building known as the haunted mansion.

One's face was covered by black bandages—DiZ.

The other was a golden-haired girl in a white one-piece dress—Naminé.

The two of them gazed at the haunted mansion.

xxx

The wind whistled past. The chilliness of it made Riku stir. It had only been days he and Mickey had parted ways.

“Sorry, your Majesty,” Riku said in a low voice, looking down from the top of a cliff. He didn't know why Mickey had left, and he still didn't have his answers.

This place was a wasteland on the outskirts of a town called Hollow Bastion.

I still can't control the darkness inside of me—control Ansem. What do I have to do to become free? Or, is it already too late to ever become free?

If you could stare straight ahead without being afraid of the dark, the things you fear would vanish.

How could I not be afraid?

It's hard to know where the light is, if it's always shining. But if the world was covered in darkness, you'd be able to pinpoint the light. If everything was covered in darkness...

Riku covered his own eyes with the black cloth he held in his hand.

If I can just hold the darkness back, I'm sure I could become better person.

Riku jumped off the cliff, swinging his blade.

xxx

I dreamt. I dream every night. But the dreams are vague, and I don't really remember them.

Xion shook her heavy head, and got out of bed. After getting ready, she headed for the lobby, as always. Today, Roxas was there before her.

“Morning, Roxas.”

“Morning.” Roxas yawned widely.

“Hey, Roxas, do you dream?”

“Huh?” said Roxas, and at that moment, Saïx appeared.

“You, today you will be going on separate missions.”

It felt as though someone was squeezing the muscle in Xion’s chest.

It’s impossible... I can’t do it without him.

“We have received information that Heartless have appeared in two separate worlds. Roxas has Beast’s Castle, and Xion has Agrabah.”

“But...” Xion looked over at Roxas, unconsciously. He was silent. *What do I do...*

At that moment, Axel poked his head in. “Oh, is Roxas going to Beast’s Castle?” Xion gazed up at Axel, as if clinging to his presence. Axel glanced her way, and nodded to her slightly. “I checked that place out yesterday, and that Heartless looked pretty darn tough. I reckon it might be impossible for him to get that thing on his own, hmm ~”

“Are you trying to tell me to let them go together?” asked Saïx in a disagreeable tone.

“I’ll go to Agrabah. Then there’s no problem, right?” Axel’s voice was a little deeper.

“Can you really defeat the Heartless in Agrabah?”

“It’ll be fine. I’m tough, you know.”

“But, you can’t collect its—”

“I’ll just keep the thing in check for now,” Axel interrupted.

“So there’s no problem, is there, Saïx?” Roxas added, helpfully.

For a moment Saïx glowered, the scar on his forehead twisting. “Today is the

last day. From tomorrow, you will be doing your missions solo.”

“Understood.” Roxas gave a slightly relieved nod, and looked at Xion. She nodded too, in reply. “Let’s go, Xion.”

“Yeah.”

Following after Roxas, who had already walked a little way ahead, Xion also stepped into a dark corridor.

xxx

After seeing off Roxas and Xion’s retreating backs, Axel stretched thoroughly. He looked at Saïx, expecting to see his face contorted, but it had already returned to its usual expressionless state.

So he was just pretending to be displeased. That, imitating the emotions in our memories, is an act particular to heart-lacking Nobodies. It’s the evidence that we don’t have hearts, and the outcome of craving one. I myself do it unconsciously, but I guess Saïx... no, all the other Nobodies must be trying.

I wonder why there is that sense of wrongness in our behaviour. Maybe because we Nobodies actually know we’re trying hard to be like humans.

But even that is pretty empty.

“Your performance was quite forced,” Saïx muttered, noticing Axel’s gazing at him.

“What is this about?” asked Axel, cracking his neck.

“I’m not all that impressed.”

Sensing an incoming lecture, Axel started walking away. “Well, I’m off to Agrabah. I’ll be back.” His figure vanished into a corridor.

xxx

Beast’s Castle was dim and dusky, with no sign of humans.

The only signs are of Heartless. And, I have bad memories of this world. Thinking to herself, Xion emerged from the corridor and into a hall in the castle, and looked around her, vacantly. *On this world, I stopped being able to use the Keyblade. On top of that...*

Xion dropped her head, staring at her hands.

Roxas stopped walking. "What's wrong?"

"I'm wondering what we're going to do from tomorrow." Xion tried to wish the Keyblade into her hand, but... there was only a bit of light, no shape appeared. "...It looks impossible, Roxas."

"You'd probably be okay with my Keyblade." Roxas called his Keyblade into his hand, and placed it in Xion's.

This also being true for the weapons belonging to the other members of the Organisation, when someone other than the original wielder tries to hold the Keyblade, it naturally returns to the hands of the wielder, but... the Keyblade Xion gripped in her hands didn't disappear.

"It looks... like it's okay."

The feel of gripping the Keyblade again after so long was strange. *The faint heat it's giving off is Roxas' warmth, I guess.*

"Use my Keyblade for today."

Xion stared at the Keyblade. "But..."

"It might make you remember something," Roxas countered.

"What will you do, Roxas?"

Roxas smiled slightly. Then, he picked up a stick that was lying by his foot. "I'll make do with this."

"But... with that..." *You won't be able to defeat Heartless.*

"You were fighting without a Keyblade, right? I'll try it, too. So, today you're using my Keyblade."

A smile surfaced on Xion's face. "...Okay. Thank you... I'll do my best to make up your share, too."

Just then, a roaring howl echoed around them. Roxas looked around uneasily. "What was that?"

"...A Heartless?"

“Let’s go look.”

Xion and Roxas set off towards the source of the sound.

xxx

Running out, Roxas stopped when he saw a passageway in front of him. He could sense something.

“...It looks like someone’s here...?” Xion whispered. Holding her back, Roxas peeped out into the passageway from the shadow of a pillar.

“Hmpf... our master could have deigned to at least leave his room...”

Standing there, was...

Roxas hid himself behind the pillar in a flurry.

“What is it?” Xion asked, in a low voice.

“There’s a walking talking candle over there...” Roxas answered. *I’m not seeing things*, he thought. *That candle is actually walking*. The candle part above the candlestick had a face on it, and it was talking to itself.

Xion also peered out from the shadow of the pillar. “It really is... why a candle?” Xion tilted her head, hiding herself again.

“I don’t know... but, he said something about a master...” Roxas was lost in thought.

“Well, maybe that candle is an inhabitant of this castle, like the servant or something?” Xion said.

“Maybe you’re right... but... what kind of being is it?”

“Maybe, ahead of here is the room of whoever they called the master.” Xion peered over at the stairs again.

“Will we go check it out...?”

“Huh?” Xion turned to Roxas.

“Let’s go check out this master’s room. We’ll make sure that the candle doesn’t catch sight of us.”

“Will it be okay, I wonder...”

“He won’t see us if we’re careful.” Roxas leaned out from behind the shadow of the pillar, and, aiming for the instant that the candle’s back was turned, he dashed out.

“W... Roxas! You’re not being careful at all!” she cried softly, chasing after him.

“Hm...?” The candle, facing the opposite direction to them, tilted its head. Xion and Roxas rushed past him in a great hurry. “Oh... I thought I felt someone there... must have been my imagination,” said the candle, turning, just as Roxas and Xion slipped into a corner beyond the passageway.

“...I thought my heart was going to stop...” said Xion, breathing heavily. Beside her, Roxas’ face looked as if nothing had happened.

Beyond where they had passed without getting noticed by the candle was an even wider passageway. At the end, Roxas could see some stairs.

Just then, the roar echoed around once again.

“Looks like it’s just beyond those stairs.” Roxas began walking, and just before the stairs, a few little black Heartless—Shadows—appeared.

“...The Heartless are here.”

“These aren’t... the Heartless we’re meant to be eliminating, are they.”

Xion swung the Keyblade at them, and beside her Roxas supported her with magic.

The opposite of yesterday. Roxas’ Keyblade felt familiar in her hands, like the one she’d been using for so long. Roxas was sent flying by a Heartless. Xion smashed the Keyblade down on it. It was the last one.

“Are you okay, Roxas?” she ran to him, still sitting on his bum.

“I’m fine,” he said, standing and brushing the dust from himself.

“I’m sorry Roxas... it must be so hard for you, having me use your Keyblade.”

“Just like it has been for you up until now. Don’t focus on it. Do you think you can remember what it felt like when you used the Keyblade before?”

Xion shook her head. “Sorry... not yet...”

Roxas’ Keyblade felt so familiar in her hands, but she couldn’t remember how

it felt to bring out her own.

“Okay... but... it’s definitely coming back soon, so everything is going to be okay,” Roxas said, smiling, and Xion smiled in return.

“Yeah... thank you, Roxas.”

Just as she said this, a shadow appeared on the ground behind her, and it quivered.

“Xion!”

Roxas pulled Xion by the arm, hiding them in a blind spot behind the stairs. The shadow that had been behind her spread like a black stain, and more Shadows appeared out of it.

At the same time, that roar resounded.

“Graaaaaar!!”

With a sound like the ground rumbling, a huge beast-like creature appeared. Charging down the stairs, it mowed down the Heartless, destroying them.

“I will not have Heartless doing as they like in my castle!” it roared, destroying the last one with a swing of its claws. Then, the creature headed back up the stairs—back to what must be its room.

“Wow...” whispered Xion unconsciously, and beside her Roxas folded his arms.

“That guy called it ‘his’ castle. So he must be the master...”

“A beast with a candle for a servant... what a weird castle, right?” Xion said in return, but Roxas was deep in thought.

“What is it?”

“...They’re different to us, aren’t they,” Roxas said.

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“That beast is the head of the castle, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And the head of our Organisation is Xemnas, right?”

“Yeah.” She didn’t really understand what he was trying to say.

“If Heartless attacked our castle, we’d be the ones to go fight them, right? Xemnas definitely wouldn’t fight.”

“That’s because it’s our job,” said Xion, squeezing the Keyblade. *It’s our duty to do our missions, and we’ll be annihilated if we don’t fulfil our duty.*

“That’s why I had that idea of what a leader is. So why was that beast fighting so hard? He has underlings like what we are...” Roxas looked up at the door through which the beast had disappeared.

“But, I don’t think we’re exactly Xemnas’ underlings... and I think that beast must have had a good reason to fight,” Xion said, looking at the Keyblade. *The reason I fight is...*

“A reason... to fight?”

“Like... wanting to protect something important, for example.”

Roxas had a strange expression on his face, which seemed odd. *Maybe he hadn’t thought of that...*

Just then, another writhing shadow appeared. It wasn’t a Shadow; it was much, much bigger.

“Roxas! Over there!” Xion screamed.

The Heartless oozed out of the ground—a Mad Bull. *It’s today’s elimination target... a huge Heartless in the shape of a dog.*

“It’s that Heartless! Let’s go, Xion—Fire!”

Xion went to nod, and in the next instant, Roxas was shooting his magic. The Mad Bull took the attack, and turned towards them.

Xion ran at the Mad Bull with the Keyblade in hand, and jumping, swung at it. *It’s been a while since I felt this. A big impact that defeating small Heartless never makes you feel.* Kicking the Mad Bull, correcting her posture mid-air, landing on the ground—Xion ran at the Mad Bull again, without even pausing for breath. *With a Keyblade, I can fight like this.*

The magic Roxas was firing made the Mad Bull stop moving. *Now...!* Xion thrust.

It was a perfect hit. The Mad Bull roared, and it began to fade away. Roxas cried out in joy at their victory, and after the Mad Bull had turned into light, a large heart floated up, rising for the sky.

Xion looked up at the heart, and turned to Roxas, who ran to her.

“Thank you, Roxas. I’ll... give this back.” She handed the Keyblade back to Roxas.

“Did you remember anything?”

“I don’t know... but, I’ll try again.” Xion held out her empty hand.

Please, Keyblade. Come back to my hand...

A second of light... it’s no good...?

“Yes!” Roxas yelled.

Xion stared at the Keyblade in her hand, dumbstruck. *The Keyblade... it came back...* Roxas grabbed her hands. “...It’s all thanks to you,” she said, gratefully, and Roxas swung her hands around.

“Let’s hurry and tell Axel! He’ll be so surprised!”

“Yeah.”

The two of them nodded, grinning.

xxx

On top of the clock tower, Axel was gazing vacantly out at the sunset.

“Aa-ahhh...” he sighed.

It was no big deal heading to Agrabah alone, but getting slammed into the ground was pretty nasty. Taking care of other people, and not being able to take care of myself... this isn’t like me.

Behind Axel, a gaping hole of darkness opened up.

“Axel!”

“Argh! What’s with you, popping out all of a sudden...”

Roxas jumped out of the corridor of darkness. Xion was there behind him, too. “How was your mission?” he asked. Axel frowned unconsciously.

“Why the hell do Heartless have to move around so annoyingly, you know? Got my ass kicked. Literally,” he added, rubbing the sore spot in a slightly exaggerated manner.

“Didn’t you say you were tough?” said Roxas, laughing.

Axel shrugged, winking. “This and that are two different things. Hey, how did your mission go?”

Roxas turned to Xion. “Ta-dah!” he announced, and Xion made the Keyblade appear in her hand.

“Oh—”

“It’s all thanks to you and Roxas.” The Keyblade disappeared as Xion smiled.

“I didn’t do anything,” said Axel, a wry smile pasting itself on his face.

“You made it so we could go on a mission together this morning, didn’t you?” said Xion, and Axel looked away.

When I’m smiled at with such a happy look... I feel uncomfortable.

“Maybe Xion wouldn’t have been able to make her Keyblade come back, if it weren’t for you, Axel,” Roxas added.

“Thank you, Axel,” they said, in unison.

This is why... this feeling is so hazy. Scratching his head unconsciously, Axel looked away from the two of them.

“Then how about a sea salt ice cream?” Axel asked, his back still turned.

“Huh?” Roxas asked.

This was Axel compromising, grudgingly. *Don’t think I can take any more of those thank-yous.*

“Then we call it even,” replied Axel. Roxas and Xion looked at each other.

“I’ll go buy it!” Xion dashed away.

xxx

The setting sun was sinking. Axel gazed vacantly out at it.

If you stare at the sunset, the image sticks on the back of your eyelids, and it

feels like you can see the sunset, even with your eyes shut.

An illusion sunset.

The reason the sunset is red... who was it told me that?

"It was tasty, wasn't it," sighed Xion, finishing her ice cream.

"I guess. Hurry up and finish yours, Roxas," Axel urged Roxas, who was the only one still eating.

"I'm enjoying the taste properly. It's Xion's treat, after all," said Roxas, gazing at the very last bite of ice cream remaining.

"Though Xion could have only treated me," Axel said, jokingly.

"No... it's thanks to both of you," Xion replied. The train's whistle could be heard from far away.

"It'd be nice if we could always be together like this," said Roxas.

"Yeah..." Xion nodded.

Axel scratched his head. "Where did that come from?"

"I was just thinking, it'd be nice if the three of us could watch the sunset together and eat ice cream after missions every day," Roxas said casually.

Once more, Axel looked at Roxas' profile. Roxas and Xion's faces were dyed red by the setting sun. Axel tore his gaze away from their profiles, and said in a low voice, "Well, that's not gonna happen—we're Nobodies, yanno."

At his words, Xion and Roxas looked plainly crestfallen. *You guys... just like always, you laugh, and get upset, just like humans.* Axel let out a small sigh.

Then, he said, "The important thing isn't whether or not we meet every day."

"Huh?" Roxas looked at him.

"Even if we don't see each other, it's more important that we think about each other all the time, anyway, right? ...Got it memorised?"

Roxas grinned. "It doesn't suit you, saying things like that."

Those words were meant to make them feel better, but... if I went into that, I'd look weak. "Shaddap," said Axel, looking away.

Xion laughed. Roxas found it funny too, and he started to laugh.

“Is it that funny?!” Axel asked almost unconsciously. Roxas and Xion stopped laughing for a moment, but when they looked at each other, they burst out laughing again.

“Hey, you guys...”

“It’s just... you’re not being very Axel-y,” Xion said, trying to get the words out, but she couldn’t stop laughing.

It would be nice if we could always be together... but that’s an unattainable dream. That’s why it will have to do to just think of each other.

But... if maybe even that becomes unattainable, what will we do?

XXX

Continue to [Chapter 2: Vacation](#)

Chapter 2: Vacation

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

Outside the window, the moon—the heart-shaped moon—floated. Axel watched it, still sprawled on his bed. There was still a little time before he had to leave on his mission.

To gather hearts, to have hearts of our own, to not let the heart mislead us...

For these past few days, I've been thinking about the meaning of Xemnas' words. To not let the heart mislead us? What does that mean? Whenever I'm alone, these thoughts just float around in my head the whole time. I don't know why I have to think so much about it. I bet the other Nobodies don't.

The heart... emotions. I think about their origins. Contemplate it. Reason about it. When did I start doing this?

The truth was, Axel knew when. Maybe I've been pretending I hadn't noticed.

Yeah... I started thinking about this stuff when Roxas—no, Roxas and Xion joined the Organisation. The two of them have gone along growing as Nobodies, and in that process no doubts have been thrown at me.

As for how it's been since Xion and I became close... that's only since I came back from Castle Oblivion.

Anyhow, I have to admit that something is changing inside of me. Before this, I wouldn't have thought about those kinds of things. Changing... why am I changing?

I called it 'contemplating', but it's just rambling.

Axel felt the waver of an unexpected presence, and sat up in bed. “Don’t just barge in here—you could at least knock,” he said, in an unpleased manner.

Saïx was standing next to the bed. Axel looked away from him and stared at a speck on the wall. However, seeming to not notice Axel’s attitude, Saïx began to speak in his usual tone.

“How has Xion been acting?”

“S’not like I’ve been keeping watch in particular, so I wouldn’t have a clue,” Axel answered in a sulky tone.

“You seem quite close,” Saïx continued.

For a moment, Axel thought about the reasons Saïx could have for being so interested in Xion. *I already know why Roxas is special. The Nobody of the Keyblade Hero is going to be special.*

But, I still don’t have the information to decide how Xion is special compared to other Nobodies. I wanted to know, but now I already understand that it would be useless to ask Saïx to tell me.

“What, am I meant to report even that to you? If you don’t need anything, get out,” said Axel, getting up out of his bed with a violent movement.

Speaking of changes, my relationship with Saïx has, too. I think it’s changed slightly since I’ve had time with Roxas and Xion. I couldn’t really say how, though.

“You and Xion are on the same mission today.”

“Thank you ever so much for going to all the trouble to tell me that,” Axel answered, facing the mirror and starting to get ready.

“I need you to go to Castle Oblivion again soon,” said Saïx, watching Axel’s face in the mirror. At those words, he finally looked at Saïx.

“Orders from ‘Lord’ Xemnas?” Axel asked, lips curling.

Saïx didn’t reply to that. “That castle still has secrets. Even there, there are unknown places—”

“Unknown places?” Axel interrupted. He turned his gaze back on his own

reflection in the mirror. “You’re talking about that chamber. I’ve scoured the place and I haven’t found it. It won’t be discovered that easily.”

The tension in Saïx’s pursed lips slackened a little. “Very well, I’ll tell you something you’d like to hear. Xion was born in that castle. Just like Naminé was, in that castle.” Saïx was silent for a moment. “The place Naminé and Xion were born—sounds like a place you’d like to go, am I right?”

That’s bait. But there’s no skill in simply taking the bait.

Axel snorted and turned to Saïx. “Well, well, well... it sounds like the one who wants to go to that castle isn’t me, it’s you, am I right?” Axel said, as he stepped past Saïx, out of his field of vision. “Cause if you go to the chamber that Xemnas is searching for—you’ll figure out his true goal, right?”

“The Chamber of Repose, and its twin, the Chamber of Awakening,” Saïx began, back still turned.

“Xemnas has a goal that he hasn’t told anyone. A clue towards it should be in the Chamber of Awakening. If we can get our hands on it, we’ll have the advantage in every conceivable way—for our goal, too.” At that last word, Saïx turned and looked at Axel.

I know... our goal. As for that, there’s no preference.

Axel sighed, and said, “Vexen and Zexion were in your way. That’s why they were taken care of—so you’d reach the top of the Organisation, right?” *It’s almost like I’m telling myself this.*

Us not having hearts doesn’t mean our behaviour means nothing.

It doesn’t mean we can’t think. Doesn’t mean we don’t have goals. Acting for the sake of those is something both humans and Nobodies share.

“I do the dirty work, so you better get to the top.” *I’m not lying when I tell him this.*

Axel looked at Saïx. Saïx stared back.

Yeah... we have a goal.

Saïx turned his back on Axel.

“In a few days, you’ll be sent to Castle Oblivion on a solo mission. Be expecting it,” said Saïx, leaving the room.

Alone, Axel clenched his fists, and followed Saïx out of the room.

xxx

Going to the lobby, Axel found Xion gazing idly out the window. Roxas wasn’t there yet.

“What are you looking at, poppet?” asked Xigbar, putting a hand on her shoulder. Axel sat down on the sofa, listening carefully to their conversation.

“...I was just looking at Kingdom Hearts.”

“You that interested in it?”

Xion turned to look at Xigbar. “I was thinking how pretty it is,” she replied.

Xigbar began to chuckle, then outright laugh. *So Xigbar found something funny in what Xion said? I still don’t really understand how that guy thinks.*

“Did I say something weird?” asked Xion, looking at him strangely.

“No—you’re growing up into a fine young thing, as they say,” he said, and laughed his head off.

It’s probably that... since the Keyblade returned to Xion, even though she hasn’t gone on missions with Roxas, she’s keeping calm and composed. If that’s what he means by growing up, then it’s true, but I don’t know why that would make him laugh this much.

“Hey! You guys talking about something interesting?” said Demyx, poking his head in.

“Poppet’s a lot more useful than you, yanno.”

“Huuuh? I don’t get it,” Demyx shrugged.

A little late, Saïx entered. “Xion.”

Xion looked up, and trotted over to Saïx. Matching her timing, Axel stood up from the sofa.

“You have a mission with Axel. Hurry and depart.”

“With Axel?” Xion turned to look at the man. Axel nodded in answer, and smiled.

“It’s the first time we’ve worked together, isn’t it.”

“Don’t go holding me back, now.”

“That should be my line.”

Saïx was watching them joking and laughing together. Axel noticed Saïx’ slightly reproachful gaze, and stopped laughing. Xion put on a meek face, as if she’d noticed too.

“Oh yeah, where’s Roxas going?” Axel asked Saïx, trying to wipe away the oppressive atmosphere.

“Investigating a new world with Xigbar.”

“Ohhh...”

There’s definitely some meaning in Saïx’s instructions. He doesn’t just pair members randomly and send them out with instructions. I bet there’s some kind of objective behind pairing Xion and I, and Roxas and Xigbar.

But, I don’t know that objective as of yet... I don’t even know if he’s not intending to tell anyone, or if he’s actually being ordered to do it like this.

“Hurry and depart.”

“Yessir.” Axel turned his back on Saïx and started walking, stepping into a dark corridor.

xxx

My head feels kind of heavy, thought Roxas, heading for the lobby. I’ve been dreaming a lot lately. The dreams are terribly vague. Well, maybe they’re full of bright worlds, but when I wake up, only vague memories are left. And then, when it’s time to get out of bed, I still feel tired, just feeling like I didn’t sleep well.

“You sure dragged your feet. Axel and co. already left,” Demyx called when Roxas entered the lobby.

“Axel and who?” Roxas asked, the question slipping out of him.

“Axel and Xion are doing a combo-act today. I love those, so much easier~”

I see... it's pretty rare for Axel and Xion to have a mission together.

A voice butted in. “And your mission is with me, kitten.” Roxas looked up at the owner, Xigbar.

“Cut it out with the weird nicknames.” *I don't really like being called kitten.*

“Haha! You like kiddo better? But Poppet's got the best one, right?”

Poppet is Xion's nickname. Why does Xigbar like those weird nicknames so much? Roxas stayed silent.

Xigbar wrapped an arm around Roxas' shoulder. “Well, today the two of us have a whole new world. Let's go, kitten,” he said.

He gets on my nerves for so many things, but since we have work to do, I have to suck it up.

Roxas brushed Xigbar's hand off, and went over to Saix to ask the details of the mission.

xxx

Axel and Xion had headed for Twilight Town. Defeating the Heartless that appeared in the town and collecting their hearts were basic missions to Xion and Roxas. And, it was Axel's job to accompany.

Coming out of a back alley and halfway up a hill, a huge swarm of Heartless appeared. Xion destroyed Heartless after Heartless with her Keyblade, causing hearts to float up into the air.

The way she moves, you wouldn't even think she'd ever forgotten how to use that thing for even a moment. She's almost as—no, she'd probably be even stronger than Roxas.

In any case, I don't really get why I had to go on a mission with her right at this time. There are certainly a fair few Heartless, but with the force Xion has now, I think she could fight just fine without my help.

“These Heartless here are the last, I think.”

“Xion, fight fight fight~” Axel clapped, as she turned around.

“What are you doing?”

“What am I doing... I’m praising you, you know.”

“You’re weird,” said Xion, laughing.

Just then, Axel suddenly felt like Xion’s face had blurred, and he rubbed his eyes.

“Is something wrong, Axel?”

“Nah...” *For a second, the Xion I saw there had the face of... Naminé.*

Xion and Naminé look very similar to begin with. But they aren’t exactly the same; their hair colour is different. But, just now, for just an instant, Xion’s hair was blonde.

What is this?

“...Axel?” The face peering anxiously at him was Xion’s again.

What happened just now?

“Haha, maybe someone cast a weird spell on me,” Axel glossed it over, laughing and scratching his head.

“Are you okay?” Xion was still looking anxious.

“I said it’s nothing. Let’s keep going.”

“...If you’re fine, then okay, but...”

“I said I’m fine. Come on, let’s go.” Axel started walking ahead.

“Wait,” said Xion, following. Turning back, she was still Xion—just like usual.

If she doesn’t... change, then what happened must have been just an illusion. The two of them—

Xion and Naminé—look so similar, I must have just seen it like that. It’s not something to worry about.

“Let’s hurry up and clear this up,” called Axel, standing at the entrance to the tram plaza at the top of the hill, gripping his chakrams.

There were many Shadows hanging around in the plaza.

“Okay.”

Xion gripped her Keyblade, and ran at the Shadows.

xxx

On the other side of the light, a whole new world opened up before them.

Roxas stepped out of the dark corridor, and looked around.

The atmosphere of this world was similar in some way to Agrabah, probably because of the huge stone buildings and the dry packed earth.

The name of this world was, of course, Olympus Coliseum.

“Soooo then, let’s investigate like crazy and get our asses home,” said Xigbar, looking back at Roxas.

“What are we investigating?” Roxas asked. He had known that they were here to investigate the world, but he didn’t know the concrete details.

“We’re checking out whether there’s anything here. Maybe there’ll be someone who could join the Organisation.”

Xigbar’s answer was a little unexpected. Lost in thought for a moment, Roxas then voiced the question that surfaced. “Hey, what kind of people can join the Organisation?”

“You know about Nobodies, right?” Xigbar asked in return. As Roxas searched for an answer, Xigbar started explaining. “When someone with a strong heart loses that heart to the darkness, it makes a Heartless. Nobodies... are a rare thing born when that happens. And then, we, the Organisation, are a gathering of Nobodies of those who had the strongest hearts, you see.”

It’s the first time I’ve heard half of that.

“So all the members of the Organisation are special...” Roxas muttered unconsciously.

“Heh heh...” Xigbar laughed. “Special... and you and Xion are special Nobodies, even amongst us.”

“Huh?” I don’t really get what he’s saying. Axel did say something similar, but it feels like he meant something slightly different.

As Roxas went to ask, a Heartless appeared in front of the two of them.

“Oops—no time for talk. We’re clearing these up, Roxas.” Xigbar gripped the Gun Arrows in his hands. A little late, Roxas summoned his Keyblade, and ran at the Heartless.

The Heartless in the shape of a canon were a bit of a pain, but because Xigbar was there, they were able to destroy the Heartless without much trouble.

Xigbar is so strong, Roxas thought, sighing and making his Keyblade disappear, when suddenly, someone was taking to him.

“Heeeey! I’ve been waiting for ya!”

“Huh?”

Turning, Roxas found a being that was kind of like a beast and kind of like a human standing there.

It’s got big horns, but it’s pretty short.

“I’ve been looking forward to you coming! So, here we are. Let’s get this show on the road! We’ll begin your training.”

“Uh... I...” *How do I explain...*

The creature in front of Roxas silenced his stuttering with an all-knowing face.

“I get the picture. I getcha. You’re that applicant pupil Herc told me about. I saw the way you fought and I knew at a glance. I’m Phil. I’ll train you.”

Herc? Phil?

Stuck, the creature named Phil circled Roxas, and ended by touching Roxas through his coat.

“Wargh! What are you doing!”

“Hmm... That Herc’s sent me a pretty wiry pupil... I’ll have to see what I can do!”

“Wh—pupil?! We’re...” Trying to do something to clear up the misunderstanding, Roxas turned to Xigbar. “Huh?! Xigbar?”

Xigbar was gone.

“You’re talking mumbo-jumbo. Hey, what’s your name, kid?”

“R-Roxas,” he replied, accidentally obedient.

“Okay, Roxas. I’ll go ahead and set up your training. You hurry up and follow me to the Coliseum.”

Speechless, Roxas watched Phil rush back into the huge stone building—*shrine?*
What the hell just happened?

“Heh heh heh.... An applicant pupil...”

Surprised at the laughing voice Roxas turned, and this time Xigbar was properly there.

“...Where did you go?”

“I decided to hide. We of Organisation XIII have—as we say—a general rule of secrecy, yanno,” said Xigbar, as if it was obvious.

“Yeah, but...” *what was I meant to do?*

“It’s a good thing though, isn’t it, Roxas?”

“Huh?” *I have no idea what he is talking about.*

“Now, we can investigate in plain sight. As his pupil, you can infiltrate them. Heh heh heh... perfect job for you, isn’t it?”

“What does that mean?”

“Hee hee hee... weell.” Laughing, Xigbar opened a dark corridor beside himself.

“You going back?”

“The excellent mister student applicant is going to investigate for me, isn’t he. Do a good job, now.”

Speechless again, Roxas stared as Xigbar disappeared.

xxx

Axel watched the sunset vaguely, then bit his ice cream.

“Roxas is late, isn’t he,” Xion said. She had already finished hers.

They’d been able to complete their mission comparatively easily. Because it

had been in Twilight Town, it hadn't taken them any time at all to make it to the usual spot. It was obvious that they would arrive before Roxas, but it felt like he was a little late even so.

"Hope Xigbar isn't picking on him," said Axel.

"Yeah," Xion nodded.

The conversation broke off.

Now that I think about it, maybe this is the first time it's been just me and her here.

"Hey, Axel," Xion began.

"Mm?"

"Watching the sunset like this, and talking... it feels like a long time ago, I did this same thing with someone." It was the first time Xion had spoken about something like that. She looked down, as if she was searching for the words to continue. "...I get that feeling from looking at the ocean, too."

She took something from her pocket. It was a seashell. "Yeah, the ocean... I feel like I've been there, talking with someone, just like this... somewhere I can hear the sound of waves." Xion stared at the shell.

"You're saying you have memories?" Axel asked.

"Not really... no, but..." Xion shook her head. "I don't know... maybe these are memories."

"Hm... I wonder."

Again, silence passed between them.

The ocean... seashells. Only one thing comes to mind. They must be Sora's memories.

I know as much as I could find out about the memories that Naminé scattered in Castle Oblivion. At Sora's home—Destiny Islands—a blue ocean spreads out to the horizon.

And, the charm Sora carried to remember the promise he made to Kairi was made out of seashells, wasn't it...?

At the same time, there were memories of the Princess—Kairi. It's only natural that Kairi is very strong in those memories, if Xion and Naminé are connected. Because Naminé is Kairi's Nobody.

No, it's possible to think that that Xion is the one directly connected to Kairi.

Who's Nobody is Xion?

Now that I think about it, it wasn't an illusion when I saw Xion and Naminé during our mission.

It feels like there must be a reason.

"You have memories, don't you, Axel?"

"Generally, yeah. They're not much use for anything, anyway," Axel replied, looking at Xion. Her expression seemed lost somehow.

"Roxas doesn't have memories just like me. Roxas and I... I wonder if we were so similar before we became Nobodies."

Axel had no answer for that. *I still can't tell anyone what I've guessed. The plans that the Organisation are carrying out, the things we are trying to do, and then this time I spend with Roxas and Xion.* Feeling how each clashed with the other, Axel narrowed his eyes and stared out at the sunset.

The Organisation—no, Xemnas—seems to think of all the members of the Organisation as pieces in a game. Saïx and I were aiming to take advantage of that. But now...

The train ran by, blowing its whistle.

Where the two sat in silence, Roxas finally showed up.

"Sorry I'm so late," he apologised.

"You're late, Roxas," said Xion, putting the seashell back into her pocket. "We already finished eating," she smiled. Roxas sat down beside her.

"Xigbar went and left me there alone. Turned into a solo-mission after all." Roxas started eating his ice cream.

"Good job then," said Axel, slipping the stick from his finished ice cream into his pocket.

“He’s terrible, that Xigbar.”

And so, the three of them began their usual small talk, smiling together.

xxx

The days never changed. Waking up hazily, Roxas headed to the lobby. He had been going on missions alone for a while now, and he felt quite tired.

“Morning...” he called, entering the lobby, but no one was there. Light from Kingdom Hearts poured into the empty room.

Going over to where Saïx normally stood, Roxas found a note pasted there.

Holiday Today

“Holiday...?” Roxas repeated, quietly. He didn’t know what the word meant.

What am I meant to do?

Well first of all, there’s no one here in the lobby. So, it doesn’t look like I’m meant to be here. Wait a minute, I think I remember Demyx having said a little while ago something about hoping we’d get a holiday soon.

Roxas left the lobby. Walking down the hall, he found Axel.

“Hey, Roxas. Haven’t had a holiday in a while, have we?” Axel seemed in better spirits than usual, despite not having a heart.

“It’s my first time.”

Axel ducked his head. “Is that right?”

Roxas looked up at Axel, brows drawn for a moment, and said, “hey, Axel. With these ‘holidays’, what am I supposed to do?”

“Huh? What are you on about?”

“I don’t know... what I’m meant to do,” Roxas confessed meekly, looking down.

Without a mission, I have no idea what to do.

“Do what you like.”

“What I like... I don’t have anything I like,” Roxas answered, and Axel let out a surprised puff of air. “What are you gonna do, Axel?”

“Me, well... sleep and sleep and sleep.”

“Isn’t that what you usually do anyway?” *I don’t really get what he means.*

“Usually, I’m making do with how much I get.”

He really wants to sleep that much? I dream, most times I sleep. Without realising, Roxas fell into deep thought.

“Well, I’m off. Spend your time well, okay?” Axel turned to go.

“Hey, wait a second, Axel!” Roxas grabbed his coat.

“What is it? You not gonna let me sleep?” Axel yawned, stretching.

“Oh, what are you two doing?” It was Xion, stopping as she happened to pass by.

“Did you see the note?” Roxas asked.

“Yeah, I did,” she answered.

“What are you going to do, Xion?”

“Hey, I’d better be getting back to my room,” said Axel as Roxas was in the middle of asking, stretching widely again.

“Uh... o-okay...” Roxas nodded uncertainly, and Axel walked away. *So he’s really that sleepy...*

“Roxas?”

“Ah, so yeah, what will you do, Xion?”

“I’m going to train,” said Xion, smiling.

“Train?”

“I have to get even better at using the Keyblade. How about you train with me?”

I don’t really understand the point of swinging the Keyblade around if I don’t have a mission.

“I’m fine thanks...”

“Okay, well I’m going then. If you change your mind, let’s do it together.” Xion

too hurried away.

Left all alone, Roxas sighed. *Do what I want... what should I do? What I like... something I like... ice cream?*

Nothing else came to mind.

Roxas started walking.

xxx

Passing by the usual back alley, Roxas started heading for the cheap sweets stand in the plaza. It was the first time he'd been to Twilight Town so early without it being on a mission. Walking down the stairs, he headed for the open space.

"Wow! Awesome!" He could hear a girl's voice.

"Hang in there!"

In the middle of the open space, the three kids Roxas often saw in Twilight Town were playing with a ball.

"Argh! No! That's it for me!"

The bad-tempered kid fell down spread-eagled on the ground.

"Ahh... so tired."

What on earth were they doing?

"Huh? What's up?"

The girl—*Olette, right*—had seen Roxas, standing there unthinkingly. She looked at him.

"Hm? Hey, you're..."

It's the fat kid who gave us information when we were looking for Xion... Pence.

Pence ran over to Roxas. "Hello!"

Not knowing what to do, Roxas nodded. "...Mm." *I'm supposed to do all I can to not make contact with the inhabitants of a world, but...*

But, Roxas was really interested in what the three had been doing.

"You're by yourself today? Did you find that friend you were looking for?"

"...Mm," Roxas nodded.

Olette popped her head out from behind Pence. "You know him, Pence?"

"Yeah, we talked together a little while ago."

"I see. Pleased to meet you! I'm Olette."

She's putting her hand out. Ummm, what am I meant to do?

"I'm Pence... but I told you that before, right? And that's Hayner over there," said Pence, introducing the boy who had finally got up off the ground, and was giving Roxas a sharp glare.

"What were you guys doing?" asked Roxas, slightly nervous.

"We were practicing performing!" Pence began to explain.

"That's hitting a ball up without letting it fall on the ground, and keeping a good tempo. It's pretty tough," continued Olette.

"Hayner is pretty much the best in town. Right, Hayner?"

Pence turned to Hayner, who walked over, holding a stick as if it were a blade.

"You... haven't seen your face around. You got some business with us?"

"Not *really*... I was just passing by." *That's all I can say if he's gonna talk to me like that.*

"Huh... well if you don't have any business with us, hurry up and get out of here," Hayner said, unpleasantly.

"Excuse me, Hayner! That's no way to speak to someone!" Olette scolded.

"Uh... sorry about that. Don't worry about him," Pence followed. But Hayner was still glaring.

Just as Roxas was thinking maybe he should leave, Hayner spoke. "You, have a go at performance."

"What for?" asked Olette, surprised.

"It's fine! Here." Hayner handed the stick-blade to Roxas. Taking it, Roxas was then handed a ball by Pence.

“Hit the ball up in the air with the blade. You win if you hit it the most times.”

“Got it. I’ll have a go.”

Roxas hit the ball, then ran to where it was falling down. Then he hit it again.

“Wow! Awesome!” Olette yelled.

There’s something fun about slicing in a rhythm like this.

After having hit it dozens of times, his sweaty hand suddenly slipped and the ball fell to the ground.

Olette and Pence ran over. “I’ve never seen such a great performance!”

“Me neither! That was amazing!”

I wonder what Hayner thinks... Roxas was thinking, when Hayner strolled lazily over.

“You’re all right. Guess I was wrong about you.”

“Um, okay...”

“I shouldn’t have gone off at you before. My bad,” said Hayner, looking away.

Gone off at me? What does he mean?

“Hayner was just cranky cause he lost to Seifer at performing,” Pence whispered into Roxas’ ear, snickering.

“Yo, enough with the life story here!”

“Heh heh heh.”

“You shut up too, Olette!” Hayner’s face was going red with anger.

There’s something... funny about this. Roxas couldn’t help his lips twisting into a smile along with them.

“Y-you’re laughing at me too!”

This is so much fun.

The four of them looked at each other, and laughed together.

Parting from the three kids, Roxas bought ice cream, and went and sat up on top of the clock tower. Right under him, Roxas could see the three kids playing

some game that looked like tag in the station plaza.

“He’s going that way!”

“I’ll get him!”

“Huff... I’m too tired for this running around!”

It looked like Hayner and Olette were ‘it’. They chased Pence as he toddled away.

Roxas bit his ice cream.

“Of course you’d be here.” Turning, he saw Axel standing there. “Ahh~ I had a great sleep.” After a long stretch, he sat down beside Roxas.

“Got you!” Hayner’s voice echoed around the plaza.

“Come on... I’m tired, you guys...” He plopped down on the ground.

“Must be the summer holidays for the kids in this town... Nah, the summer holidays are a little further away, I’d say,” Axel murmured. Roxas looked at him.

“Summer holidays...? What are those?”

“They’re some thirty days of holidays that humans enjoy,” Axel said, smiling.

“Thirty days? What would they do with themselves for that long... I didn’t even know how to fill one day,” Roxas said idly, watching Hayner and the others.

Today was nice because I happened to spend time with Hayner and the others, but if I had thirty days, I’m sure I’d be screwed.

“No way. They get a tonne of homework, and they’ve gotta play every day. There’s so much to do that the time’s over before you know it.”

Roxas finished his ice cream. “Hmm... I think I could handle about seven days, maybe...” he said, hugging his knees.

It would definitely be fun to have about seven days in a row like this one, I think.

“Well, most kids spend the whole thing playing with their friends. Then when the summer holidays are almost over, they do the homework together,” Axel said, as if he was remembering.

Maybe, Axel has memories of summer holidays from when he was a human...?

"It's fun to play with friends... I'd forgotten, since becoming a Nobody," Axel said, almost to himself, and looked at Roxas. "So, what did you get up to?"

"I knew the two of you would be here," Xion said, over the top of Axel. Roxas looked up, to see that she had appeared beside him.

"Where were you, Xion?" Roxas asked.

"I didn't go anywhere, I was just training, but... I gave up. How about the two of you? Did you go off somewhere together?"

"Axel was asleep the whole day."

"What! That's such a waste~!" Xion said, loudly.

"Unlike you two, I'm busy every day, so I was pretty tired."

"Like the two of us have nothing to do and aren't tired!" Xion interrupted his excuse. The three of them laughed.

"Back to missions again tomorrow," Axel remarked.

"Another holiday would be nice," said Xion. Roxas nodded.

From far off, the sound of birds chirping could be heard.

"Oh yeah. I won't be able to see you guys for a while," Axel said quietly, suddenly.

"...Huh?" Roxas and Xion said at the same time, in surprise.

"I'm getting sent out on investigation for a few days."

"Where?" Xion pressed, but Axel just stretched like always, and grinned.

"It's. A. Secret."

"What? What's with that?" Roxas protested.

Axel shrugged. "It's a classified mission."

"So, you can't even tell us?" Xion complained, pressing further.

"Everyone's got secrets they can't even tell their friends. Got it memorised?" Axel said. There was a smile playing on his lips, but his voice was slightly deeper

than usual.

“...Secrets...” Roxas repeated, unconsciously. *Do I have secrets like that...?*

Xion looked down too, as if lost in thought.

In the heavy atmosphere, Axel laughed. “Haha. I’m kidding. Saïx gets on my case if I blabber too much about missions, that’s all. You guys be careful too, yeah?”

Those words of Axel’s are probably very important advice.

When Xion became unable to use the Keyblade, I don’t know what would have happened without Axel there. I think I probably wouldn’t have been able to do anything.

“...Got it,” Roxas nodded, meekly.

“Don’t go doing stupid things while I’m gone, you hear?”

“Hey, we so wouldn’t,” Xion replied.

“I wonder now... can I really trust you guys?”

“You’re terrible!” Xion protested. Finding something funny about the situation, Roxas huffed.

“Hey, what are you laughing about, Roxas... hee hee,” Xion laughed. Axel couldn’t help but laugh along.

It’d be nice if the three of us could always be like this, laughing together.

Yeah... like the three kids in this town.

xxx

Returning to the castle, Axel walked the hallways alone, heading for his own room.

We don’t have holidays very often, but that’s okay, really.

“So you’ve finally come home.”

Axel turned to face the owner of the voice. *There’s only one person who’d say something like that to me—only Saïx.*

“I’m free to do what I want with my own holiday, aren’t I? Am I supposed to

consult everything with you?”

But there was no reply. After a slight pause, Saïx spoke. “You’re getting too close to those two.”

“Yessir, understood sir,” said Axel, and Saïx turned away.

Is that all he wanted to say? Axel wondered, and started to walk away. But, that moment, he heard Saïx speak. It was in a small voice, but he really did hear it.

“You’ve changed...”

Listening to Saïx’ footsteps echo, Axel looked down at the ground.

“Changed, have I...” he said, in a small voice.

xxx

Continue to Chapter [3: Battle Against Riku](#)

Chapter 3: Battle against Riku

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

Four figures had appeared in the Round Room.

“What is the state of affairs?” Xemnas asked Saïx.

“Nearly all our plans are advancing in a satisfactory manner. Axel headed out for Castle Oblivion this morning,” Saïx reported.

“And Poppet is brilliant, of course,” Xigbar butted in. “Vexen’s annihilation is a crying shame, as they say,” Xigbar grinned, meaningfully.

“His know-how is all being kept safe as records,” Saïx stated, indifferent. “There aren’t any problems as of now.”

Xaldin fixed Saïx with a sharp look. “So what will you do when there is a problem? There are possibilities beyond your control,” he said, arms folded.

“Well, if you were to say that I was responsible for what happened to those destroyed by the Hero and his party, I’d be troubled.”

“Those destroyed by the Hero, huh?” Xigbar repeated, seemingly trying to provoke him.

Saïx ignored him and continued. “I have received information from Demyx and Luxord that someone wearing our same coat has appeared on many worlds.”

“They aren’t just mistaken?” Xaldin asked.

“Whether or not they are mistaken, we ought to look into it,” said Saïx.

“You’re to send Xion,” Xemnas ordered immediately.

Xigbar shrugged his shoulders. “Where’s the sense in sending Xion? There’s a chance that the faker is, as they say, in cahoots with the Hero’s party, right? Have you even gotten hold of the Hero’s whereabouts?”

“Luxord is sweeping the worlds, but he hasn’t found him yet. And, Axel has been sent to Castle Oblivion to search for clues on the Hero and his friends,” Saïx answered, quietly. No change of expression could be seen in his face.

Xigbar crossed his legs, resting his elbows down. “Axel, huh...”

“Anyway, can there even *be* someone wearing the same coat as us?” Xaldin asked. “Even including the spares, all of them should be under our management. It should have been reported if any went missing.”

Saïx sighed heavily. That was the only reaction he’d shown so far in today’s meeting. “We haven’t received confirmation on those of the Castle Oblivion members. I’ll have Axel look into that, too.”

“Axel, Axel... you two are quite the pals, aren’t you? Wonder what you two whisper about,” Xigbar shot, jiggling his crossed leg.

“Now you’ve mentioned it, I wonder the same about you.” At Saïx’s words, the atmosphere froze over.

“We have one goal. Don’t forget that,” Xemnas said. Saïx looked up at him. “Keep an eye on Xion. You’ll find out about the Hero that way also,” ordered Xemnas, and then he disappeared.

xxx

I dreamed again. In my dream, there was this beautiful ocean... and, I could hear the sound of waves the whole time. Could that have been Destiny Islands? Now that I think about it, you can see the ocean from Twilight Town, too.

Xion got up out of bed, got ready, and left her room. She arrived just a little later than usual; already there was no one but Saïx and Xigbar left in the lobby.

“Morning. Today’s mission is...?”

“We have received information that someone is out there wearing the Organisation’s coat. Go and investigate this,” Saïx stated.

“Where do I go?”

“Agrabah, to begin with.”

“To begin with...?”

“They have been witnessed on several worlds. We still do not know whether it is actually the same person. We also do not know much about which worlds they have appeared on,” Saïx said, indifferently.

“If I find them, should I kill them?”

“No, you must ascertain what kind of being our friend is. Capture them if you can. Don’t kill them.”

Xion nodded. “Understood.”

Xigbar, standing and watching their exchange with his arms folded, opened his mouth. “You’ve been working really well lately haven’t you, Poppet.”

“...Thank you,” Xion replied in a small voice.

“Thank you? Why do you have to say thanks?”

“Well, you were praising me, weren’t you? Was I wrong?”

“Haha... Yeah, I guess you could see it like that.” He pressed his hand to his mouth and snickered.

“Did I say something funny?”

“No, no. You’re fine.”

Xion looked up at Xigbar, anxiously. Beside them, Saïx didn’t show any notable reaction. He just watched.

xxx

At that time, Roxas was with Xaldin at Beast’s Castle. The many gouges inside the castle told of the violence of the beast’s battle with the Heartless. But, Roxas had one question. He decided to ask Xaldin.

“Why does the beast fight?”

“That’s what we’re investigating.” The two talked as they ascended the stairs from the open room. The door right in front of the top of the stairs led to the ballroom. Opening the door, Xaldin walked out into the middle of the ballroom

floor. “This place doesn’t suit an ugly beast. You can tell that the creature himself thinks so too,” he said, looking around.

“How do you know?”

“It looks like there are Heartless here too, but you can’t see any traces of the beast having fought them. All I can think is that the beast himself is avoiding this room. In any case, this room too is stained in the dark colour of despair. Just like the heart of the Beast,” said Xaldin, smiling slightly.

What on earth does that mean? Leaving the ballroom and climbing the stairs on the left, Roxas thought to himself.

“Wait—something’s there.” Maybe because he was thinking while walking, Roxas was slightly surprised when Xaldin held him back. In the hallway at the top of the stairs, a clock was pottering about.

Is that the same kind of thing as the candle I saw before?

“Today too, the Master is exterminating the monsters appearing in the castle.... At this rate, he won’t meet with Lady Belle today, either... Is this as close as they’ll get? And when there’s so little time left for us...,” the clock muttered worriedly to itself, walking around.

Roxas looked down, unconsciously. “So little time left? What’s that about?”

“I bet that thing used to be a human too, just like the beast.”

“The beast used to be human?”

“Perhaps... the shapes of the inhabitants of this castle were changed by some curse.”

“...Curse...”

“Roxas, ignore him. Let’s get on with the investigation.”

The two of them resumed the investigation. *That’s right, I’ve been down past this hallway before.* Running through the hall so as not to be seen by the clock, they climbed more stairs.

There were many rooms there, and light was spilling from the deepest one. It seemed the door was opened just a little.

“There’s a presence in that room. Check out what’s inside.”

Nodding at Xaldin, Roxas peered into the room through the crack in the door. Inside the room was a human woman. She was the first human he’d seen in this world.

“So he’s exterminating the monsters again today... he’s been doing that constantly as of late.” The woman walked around the room, lost in thought.

“Ohh... for there to be a human in this castle... That woman must be Belle,” said Xaldin, peeking through the door from behind.

Roxas turned to him. “How do you know?”

“That servant thing just mentioned Lady Belle. That woman, being treated so politely with this room, must be that person.”

“So that person is Belle...”

Belle was a pretty woman. And, in this dim and dusty castle with its mouldy smell, only this room smelled kind of nice somehow.

“Roxas, we’re going to the beast’s room.” Xaldin walked briskly away, and Roxas followed after.

xxx

Xion walked through the city of Agrabah.

“...Not here...”

The glaring sunlight reflected from the ground. *All that’s left is inside the cavern. Is there really a fake Organisation member out there?*

“So hot...”

If I could, I’d love to take this coat off, thought Xion. I’ve heard that the Organisation coats are special things that protect our bodies from the darkness. So I should leave it on my body, or so Saïx said. Cause if I take it off, I’ll be consumed by darkness. But, what on earth is darkness? The heart, and darkness. There are so many things I don’t know.

Turning to head for the cavern, her legs were suddenly overcome by a wobbly feeling.

“Huh—”

Xion fell against the wall, her body feeling as if it would succumb. For a second, something flittered deep in her chest.

This is... some kind of memory?

Who are you...?

xxx

Roxas and Xaldin stood in front of the beast's room.

“So this is the beast's room.”

“Yeah... let's look inside and see what it's like.”

Roxas opened the door quietly and looked. The curtains were shredded, and the walls were scarred with long gashes. It looked like a terribly violent room, but, the beast didn't appear to be in it.

And deeper, on a moonlit-flooded table stood a red flower in a glass case. ...A rose?

“Huh?” At that moment, right in front of Roxas' peeking eyes, a black haze spread, and Xaldin appeared. It seemed that once he knew the beast wasn't there, he had entered using a dark corridor.

Xaldin gazed fixedly at the rose.

“This rose—I can sense a strange power...,” Xaldin muttered, and he turned, walking straight out of the room.

“Let's RTC.”

“Is that okay?” Roxas called to Xaldin's retreating back.

Xaldin stopped walking. “What are you talking about.”

“Is it really okay not to investigate any further?”

“Having found that was quite enough. We've found something very interesting.”

“You mean, that lady?”

“A woman? Ah, you mean that Belle woman. She too certainly does seem to be

connected in some way to the beast. But that rose from before is much more important. What do you think, Roxas?”

“I could see he treasured it, but...” *It was put in a glass case, and set up in the deepest part of the room. I could also feel it sparkling, only that place, as if it were special.*

“It didn’t seem like a normal rose. The gouges all through the rest of that room were missing in the corner in which the rose rested—I don’t know what it is, but there’s no mistaking that the beast treasures that thing.”

“The beast’s important rose—so, the beast is fighting the Heartless in order to protect that rose?”

“Yeah, probably. I could feel a strange power coming from it. Maybe there’s something drawing the Heartless...”

“The reason the beast fights, huh.” Roxas was lost in thought. *I don’t get why the beast would fight for the sake of a thing like that.*

“We’ll withdraw for today. We’ve found the beast’s weak point.”

“Weak point?”

“When someone treasures something, the stealing of their heart... When their heart is to be stolen, that is their weak point.”

“Their heart is to be stolen...? I don’t really get it.” *I’m understanding what Xaldin is saying less and less.*

“Of course you don’t. We don’t have hearts. Let’s RTC.” Xaldin walked quickly away, and Roxas chased after him.

xxx

In Twilight Town, Xion watched the sunset vaguely. In the end, she hadn’t been able to find the Organisation coated person. *It’s a little tiring, searching for something you’re not sure is even there.*

“You’re early,” came a voice from behind her, and she turned. Roxas was standing there with an ice cream in his hand.

“It was an easy mission,” Xion replied, a smile on her lips.

“Axel... must be on that confidential mission...,” Roxas muttered. Sitting down next to Xion, he started eating his ice cream. Xion had already finished hers.

“Roxas, where did you go?”

“Beast’s Castle. I was with Xaldin,” he answered, making a face like he remembered something, and looking over at Xion. “Xion, do you remember that monster?”

“Monster...? The master of the castle, right? I remember.” *Roxas and I went to Beast’s Castle together on a mission.*

Roxas continued. “I found out what he treasures. But, Xaldin called it a weak spot.”

“Something you treasure is a weak spot?”

Roxas looked down. “I don’t really get it...”

There are so many things that Roxas and I don’t understand, Xion thought. If Axel was here right now, I know he’d explain it to us.

“I guess Axel won’t come home for a while...,” Roxas said, and Xion nodded.

Once Axel gets back, there are many things I want to ask him.

xxx

Axel was walking through Castle Oblivion. It wasn’t all that long ago that he’d last been here, but the inside of the castle had changed drastically. The halls and rooms were made of white stone just like they’d been before, but their combinations and the distances between them had changed.

I know the rooms in this castle change in accordance with memories. So, I wonder whose memories they’re changing for now?

“What a pain,” Axel muttered, and he looked up at the ceiling.

I’ve been holed up here with nothing but dusks for company for a few days, and now I’m talking to myself. This castle, devoid of people, is under the control of subordinate Nobodies. Subordinate Nobodies follow orders loyally, but they can’t do any more than that. The biggest difference between them and Organisation member Nobodies is that we can think for ourselves... Well, I

wonder what 'thought' is, anyway. What's the connection between 'thought' and the heart?

"Argh this is such a pain..."

Axel scratched his head, and continued searching the castle.

xxx

"So you still haven't found them?"

"I'm sorry..." Xion let her head hang. She and Saïx were the only two in the lobby.

These past few days, every day I've been here and there searching all over so many worlds, but I haven't been able to find the Organisation coated person.

"On top of that, you overslept?"

"...I haven't really... been sleeping well, so..."

It's nothing new, definitely not the first time it's happened, but I just don't feel like I've slept properly at night. I dream. In fact, every day I'm dreaming the whole time. Maybe it's because of that... Even in the day time, I feel like a zombie, and sometimes I feel like I'm about to faint.

"Even though I told you that resting properly is also a mission in itself?"

Since the day before yesterday, I've been searching two worlds a day. But I haven't found them. Saïx is criticising me so harshly.

"The order that you search for the person wearing the Organisation coat came directly from Lord Xemnas. If you go on not finding them, you will be opposing Xemnas' orders. You understand, don't you?"

"Huh..." *I didn't think that my mission was decided on Xemnas' orders. I've heard that Saïx is the one who allocates missions.*

"If you understand, leave quickly and find them." Saïx turned his back on Xion, and left the lobby.

Xion was left alone in the large room.

xxx

Roxas had headed to a new world. A strange, somewhat dark world, despite the huge moon hanging overhead—Halloween Town. Dimly burning lights were scattered here and there, and the atmosphere was one of suspense.

“What a weird world...” *Can’t see anyone who might be a civilian.*

Walking along, he came out into a wide space, where there was a large device that looked like it performed some kind of function.

“What is this thing?” The moment Roxas looked up at the device, something came swinging from somewhere above his head, passing before his eyes lightning fast. “Waah!”

It was a huge blade that looked like it could slice a human body neatly in half. “That’s dangerous... but why would someone leave something like this here?” Roxas tilted his head.

A bat wheeled above him.

xxx

Xion had headed to Beast’s Castle.

It seems like the person wearing the Organisation coat is travelling from world to world. For normal humans, the world they are ought to live on is fixed. In other words, that Organisation coat-wearing person isn’t a normal human. But, that’s all I know right now. Saïx told me the information that dusks had witnessed, but I can’t figure out what kind of person my opponent is just from that.

The castle opened out onto a large garden.

Standing on top of the stairs leading down to the garden, Xion hung her head. “...Looks like they aren’t here...”

Just then.

Xion looked up, and was gripping her Keyblade quick as a flash. *That presence—it’s a special presence.* In the centre of the garden stood the owner of that presence, the person in the Organisation coat. *They have their hood pulled so far forwards, I can’t see their face. To find them all of a sudden—what do I do?*

The other person was staring straight at Xion and her grip on the Keyblade. In

an instant, an eerily-shaped blade was rushing into her opponent's hand. So *fighting is the only way?*

Xion, Keyblade in hand, rushed at her opponent. Their weapons clashed. It was a strange sensation. *A strange sensation...* Xion was overcome by the impact.

Who are you? Do I know you?

The hesitation took the edge off Xion's movements. *No, even without that hesitation I'm not sure I could beat them. Every time my opponent's blade clashes with the Keyblade, the vibrations spread numbness through my hands.*

Then, her Keyblade was sent flying, and her body hit the ground. *I bumped my chest and it hurts. I can't breathe.* Xion lay on her stomach as she had fallen, unable to move.

Her opponent removed their hood, and stared down at Xion. Feeling their hand touch her body, Xion sat up on reflex. Just then, she saw their face for the first time.

A silver haired man, wearing a black blindfold.

I don't know why, but the man is moving back, as if in fear.

"You... who are you? Why do you use the Keyblade?"

I don't know what this man means. Xion asked a question, instead. "What about you, why are you dressed like one of the Organisation?"

The man turned his back on Xion, and started walking. "To make sure my best friends sleep is not disturbed," he said.

His best friends... sleep? What does he mean?

"I don't know what you are, but a fake could never beat me. This Keyblade is a fake, too." The man picked up the fallen Keyblade, and threw it in Xion's direction.

"This Keyblade is a fake?" Xion looked down for a moment, then glared at the man. "Don't say such a selfish thing!" *This Keyblade is something important that Roxas and I worked hard to get back. It can't be a fake or anything like that.*

Xion gripped the Keyblade again, rose, and sliced at the man. But—without

even calling his weapon, the man sidestepped Xion's attack, and swept her feet out from under her. Xion fell to the ground again.

"I'm not being mean here. Hurry and leave those guys," he stated, turning his back on Xion, and he started to walk away.

"Aren't you the fake here?!" Xion yelled, sitting up. *This is a human pretending to be of the Organisation. For them to call my Keyblade a fake—it's a lie, I know it.*

The man stopped. "Yeah... Maybe I'm the one that's not meant to exist." The man's figure disappeared into the cloaking darkness.

Left behind, Xion beat her fists on the ground. Then she screamed—a scream that transcended voice.

xxx

Staring vacantly at the sunset, Roxas was eating an ice cream like always. *Xion's not here yet. Come to think of it, I don't think I've been seeing her in the lobby in the mornings, either, lately.*

"Hey, Roxas!"

At the sound of this voice he hadn't heard for a while, Roxas span around with force.

"Axel—when did you get back?"

"Just now," he said, sitting down next to Roxas.

"That was earlier than I was expecting."

"Well, I am superb. How have you been? Going well? What's Xion's story?"

"She hasn't come yet," Roxas answered, biting his ice cream. "She's usually shown up by now, I think." *But... why, I wonder. I'm uneasy. I haven't felt like this before.*

"Hmm... that reminds me, did you guys bungle anything while I was gone?"

"We didn't!" Roxas snapped, and Axel laughed.

Maybe... this uneasiness is just my imagination. "Xion's late, isn't she...," Roxas said, and he looked down.

Xion still didn't come.

xxx

I didn't feel like going to eat ice cream. Xion sat on top of her bed, hugging her knees. My injuries hurt. Just before, I saw a big bruise had formed under where the coat had protected me. But I'll be in trouble if they find out that I'm injured... so I won't report it.

That guy... that silver-haired guy. That fake-Organisation-member guy. That wearing-our-coat-for-some-scheme guy. He must have some special power. If he didn't, then he wouldn't give off such a strange feeling. That special... atmosphere. What is he, anyway. Even if I fight him again, as I am now, I might not be a match for him.

But, I have to fight. I have to fight. I have to fight. I have to fight. I have to fight. Xion said it over and over. I have to beat him—

xxx

In the end, Xion didn't come to the clock tower yesterday. Even though Axel made the effort to come...

Wanting to hurry and tell Xion of Axel's return, Roxas hurried down the hallway towards the lobby. *I can go on my mission after I've seen Xion.*

"One more time—please!"

The voice that suddenly echoed down the hall belonged to Xion. *Good. Looks like I get to see her today.*

Saïx and Xion were standing at the curve in the hall. Roxas went to run up to them, but the intense atmosphere between the two stopped him.

"We don't have this much time to squander. You really are a defective failure, that's all it is."

Defective failure...? What is this about?

Saïx glanced at Xion, who stood hanging her head, and then left the area.

"Xion...?"

Xion turned at Roxas' voice. But—she ran off, as if escaping.

“...Xion...,” Roxas murmured, alone in the hall.

xxx

Roxas was on a mission with Xaldin at Beast’s Castle. Extermination replacing investigation was the only difference between the last mission there. Xaldin was defeating the Heartless steadily with his spears. Tagging along behind and killing Heartless, Roxas couldn’t stop thinking about what had happened with Xion that morning.

What on earth was it about...

“Humph... No response. The mission is over. Roxas, let’s RTC.”

“Yeah.” There had been a large Heartless of course, but it hadn’t been that strong.

I want to hurry up and RTC, so I can go to the usual spot. Maybe Xion will come if I do that.

Roxas and Xaldin went to RTC together, and at that moment, a roar echoed around them.

“Graaaaaaaaaaaaaahh!!”

“What was that?!” Roxas looked around instinctively.

“That voice just now—it was probably the beast. Let’s go check it out,” Xaldin pointed, and Roxas nodded.

The beast’s room wasn’t too far from where they were. The area surrounding the room was even more of a ruin than it had been the last time they’d come, with many more gouges on the walls.

“Graaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahh!!”

The growl was even louder and closer than before.

“I... don’t want to lose it!” That cry had come from the beast. “My original form—the rose... before these petals fall...”

Quietly assessing the situation from the doorway, they saw the beast put his face in his hands.

“Huh, so that’s how it is. Sounds like that rose is connected to the beast’s

form,” Xaldin muttered.

“Is that to do with the beast’s curse?” asked Roxas.

“Yeah—if he doesn’t do something before the petals of that rose fall, he won’t be able to break the curse, I’d say,” Xaldin smirked. “The curse... the beast’s form... the rose... heh heh heh... we can use this.”

“What do you mean?”

“You wouldn’t understand. Okay, let’s RTC, Roxas.” Xaldin began to walk away, without answering Roxas’ question.

Left behind, Roxas turned back to the door of the beast’s room.

That rose—that he treasures... a weak point. I don’t really get it, thought Roxas. Maybe if I asked Axel, he’d help me understand...?

xxx

Thinking that she didn’t really care about investigating, Xion brought down the Keyblade on a Heartless in front of her. She destroyed one of the bug-shaped Heartless that were the target for extermination in one hit. For every one she destroyed another would appear, and it was getting on her nerves.

This world was dark and gloomy with many rows of tombstones—Halloween Town.

Above her head was a huge moon. Xion looked up at it.

What on earth... should I do?

xxx

No one was on top of the clock tower yet. *It would have been nice if Xion had come today,* thought Roxas, eating an ice cream.

By and by, Axel came.

“Where’s Xion?”

“She’s not here today, either.”

Axel sat down beside Roxas. “Really...”

The two of them sat side by side in silence, eating their ice creams.

That's right—I was going to ask Axel. "Axel?"

Axel looked over at him with his ice cream in his mouth. "Hm?"

"Is there something you don't want to lose, Axel?" he asked.

Axel took his ice cream out of his mouth and shrugged. "Something I don't want to lose? Where's this coming from, all of a sudden?"

"Today I met someone who had something he didn't want to lose. It was really important to him, and Xaldin said it becomes his weak point. I thought, I don't have something like that..."

Axel breathed out in surprise. "Of course not, you don't have a heart," he replied.

Roxas looked down at his toes. *"Maybe..." Even Nobodies should have things they don't want to lose. But... I don't. I can't find the right words. How can I explain it to Axel? "...But for example, if you took Demyx's sitar away he'd definitely get cranky, right?"*

"Well... that would happen, yeah. So even without a heart, maybe there are things we don't want to lose... In that case, maybe what us Nobodies don't want to lose is our memories of the past. Our memories of the past create things we don't want to lose."

"Memories of the past... I don't have any of those," said Roxas, still looking down, and this sent Axel into thought.

Then he said, "Even without memories of the past, you should have things you don't want to lose."

Those words were a little surprising, and Roxas turned his face towards Axel. "Like what?"

"What about the memories you made since joining the Organisation?"

"...I don't get it." *Memories... I might not have memories from my time as a human, but I have made memories since coming to the Organisation.* "But, yeah... I'd hate to forget about you and Xion."

I don't think I want to forget them. That's what it is to lose your memories. If that's true, then I wonder where on earth they went, the memories that

belonged to that human me?

“Then you have something you don’t want to lose, don’t you? I guess everyone, even us Nobodies, have things we don’t want to lose.”

Roxas looked down again. *That’s... so very...* “Scary, isn’t it,” he grumbled.

“Afraid, even without a heart?” Axel asked.

“If my friends... if you and Xion weren’t here anymore... no, if the two of you were erased from inside me, I’d be afraid.” Roxas shivered as if he were cold. *I’m afraid just thinking about it. Afraid...? What is afraid?*

“Fear and emotions like that don’t exist for us,” said Axel.

“But... I’m scared, right now.” *If Axel and Xion were to be erased... That makes me more afraid than having my own existence erased. I don’t want to think about it.*

“If you really think so, then maybe you’re remembering being scared from somewhere in your memory,” said Axel, looking far into the distance.

Xion didn’t come today, either. Roxas looked up, and gazed at the sunset. *If... if all my memories were to vanish, what would I do...?*

xxx

Continue to [Chapter 4: Wrong Switch](#)

Chapter 4: Wrong Switch

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

“Fwaa~ahh...,” Axel yawned, stretching out on the sofa. *The unchangingly cold and uncomfortable sofa.*

There was still no one in the lobby yet.

Maybe I’m a bit early... Well that’s to be expected, seeing as I pulled an all-nighter to write the report for the mission at Castle Oblivion I was on until yesterday. And just cause I spent all night doing the report doesn’t mean I was slacking off on the mission.

From his place on the sofa, Axel turned to look out the window up at Kingdom Hearts, floating there.

“You’re early, aren’t you?”

Axel tore his gaze away from Kingdom Hearts at the sound of the voice. Saïx was standing there.

“So are you.”

“It’s just that you’re always late,” said Saïx, and went to stand in his usual place.

Is it that time already.

Axel yawned widely again, stretching, and one more person appeared. It was Xion.

“Hey, Xion.”

“...Morning,” Xion replied, averting her gaze, and walked towards Saïx without

even giving Axel a chance to continue. Her turned back seemed to reject Axel.

“Saïx. What’s my mission today?”

“Heartless extermination in Twilight Town.”

“Understood.”

Without one strictly unnecessary word leaving her lips, Xion disappeared into the darkness she’d opened up in the corner of the lobby.

Now that I think about it, I didn’t see Xion at the clock tower yesterday, or the day before that.

“.....” Axel stared at the spot where Xion had disappeared.

As if noticing Axel’s gaze, Saïx spoke. “...You’ve heard the story, right?”

“Story? No, I haven’t spoken to Xion since I got back here.”

“Hmm...”

Maybe Saïx is thinking he’s said too much.

“It has become clear that that thing is a failure, that’s all.”

“And what do you mean by that?”

At almost the exact same time Axel asked that, Roxas appeared in the lobby. Axel held his tongue.

“You’re early, Axel.”

“Yeah...” Axel nodded noncommittally, returning his gaze to Saïx, but Saïx was expressionless.

“Roxas, today you are to collect hearts in Twilight Town.”

“Understood.”

“Hurry and leave.”

Roxas nodded, and turned to Axel. “Kay, Axel. See you later.”

“Y-yeah.”

Roxas hurried into a dark corridor, just as Xion had.

Xion and Roxas have been sent to the same world on their missions... And the

fact that it is Twilight Town is pretty interesting too, but I have no reason in particular to ask.

But instead, Saïx was the one to open his mouth. "...You have questions, don't you?"

He had made that remark after making sure that Roxas had completely vanished. Axel stared at Saïx, took a short breath, and asked, "Are Xion and Roxas on the same mission?"

"Each has their own mission, one to defeat a Heartless and one to collect hearts, but I've given them the opportunity to meet up over there."

"On purpose? You did? What for?" Axel threw the questions one after the other.

"It's still necessary to keep them friendly to a certain degree."

"What do you mean?"

"...Don't get too involved with them."

"What do you mean by that. Only saying that much?"

"You'll see soon enough. Well then, next is your mission for today. The man wearing the coat—no, maybe for you it would be better if I called him Riku."

"...Have you already read my report?"

"I can guess without having to read it."

One of the things I had to investigate at Castle Oblivion was the coats. But, the coats hadn't disappeared. This means that someone had gotten their hands on one through some other means. There are a limited number of people who could do such a thing.

Axel had written the name of Riku, whose whereabouts were unknown, in his report, prefaced with 'it's only a guess, but.'

Doesn't mean I have anything to base it on, but it looks like Saïx is thinking the same thing anyway.

"Pursue his whereabouts. But, don't challenge him to a fight. Xion lost."

"Xion lost...?" *So that's why she looked so depressed.*

“Though it just means that thing is a failure.”

“I think calling Xion a failure is going too far if her opponent was Riku, you know.”

The Riku I met before didn't seem all that strong. But, Riku has that THING lurking in his body. That thing, the power of darkness... no, the power of Xehanort. Riku wasn't able to control that power, in Castle Oblivion. But, time has passed since then. I don't know what he's like, now.

“...I wonder about that.”

“Hey, why—”

“I don't care which world you go to,” Saïx said, cutting him off. “Even just that presence is fine. Find out about him. If you do, it should give us clues as to where the Hero is.”

So, he's not going to answer me any further. Why do you dislike Xion so much...?

“Got it,” Axel nodded, narrowing his eyes at Saïx.

“Don't get too involved with Xion,” Saïx repeated, and Axel stared back at Saïx, testing him.

“Is that an order... or a warning?”

Saïx didn't answer.

xxx

Today's mission too seemed easy. Xion trudged wearily in the direction of the target Heartless. The mission was in a familiar town—Twilight Town.

Yesterday, and the day before, I didn't go to the clock tower. I haven't talked to Roxas and Axel. I don't want to talk to anyone. I don't know what I should say. And of course, I don't know what I should do.

On top of that, I can't sleep. I dream. It's scary

I don't remember what the dreams are about, but they're very scary.

Xion stopped walking. She could hear the bell of the clock tower in the distance.

What should I do?

“Xion!”

Xion gasped at the sudden call, and turned around. That voice belonged to—Roxas. He was smiling and running towards her.

“Roxas...”

Roxas is in front of me, out of breath. This can't be... a coincidence, no. Did he follow me?

“What about your mission?”

“I have my mission here, today. What about you?”

“Really... I have mine here, too.”

Usually we don't have separate missions on the same world, so it feels weird... Maybe there really are coincidences like this. Or did Roxas make it happen? I don't know why Saix would go to the trouble of doing it, though.

I don't know what to say to Roxas. Xion looked up at the sunset. But, I have to tell him properly.

Xion looked at Roxas. “Hey, Roxas...,” she said, taking a deep breath, and then she said “I’m sorry for running away yesterday.”

“It’s fine, don’t worry about it,” Roxas said, and Xion was a little relieved.

I wonder why I ran away, that time... I think I was scared of something.

Xion looked at her fingers, and kept speaking. “See, I... failed a mission.” *My fingers feel cold, for some reason.* “Roxas, you heard about the fake Organisation member, right? I lost to him. And then Saix called me a defective failure.”

Roxas frowned unhappily.

Hey, Roxas. You and I shouldn't have hearts, so why is it so painful for us, do you think?

“Um...”

“It’s okay. I don’t care what that guy says,” Xion said, and Roxas stopped what

he was going to say.

Yeah, cause I don't care. It's okay. But my chest hurts.

Xion looked up at the sunset. Then, Roxas spoke.

"Xion... How about we do our missions together today?"

"Huh?"

"It'll mean we both have to do two missions, but we'll definitely finish faster if we do it together." Roxas was smiling.

Maybe you're right... maybe.

"...Yeah. We can hurry up and have some ice cream, so maybe it's a good idea," Xion replied, thinking. *Just like that time... like when I couldn't use my Keyblade. Roxas is always doing nothing but helping me.*

"Let's go, Xion."

Xion nodded.

xxx

After defeating two giant Heartless and buying ice cream, they then headed up to the clock tower—to the usual place.

"Axel's late," said Roxas, eating ice cream. "Or, maybe we finished too early."

Roxas is smiling faintly... but I can't smile. Xion stared vaguely at her half-eaten ice cream. *Hey, I bet Roxas could have beaten that guy, couldn't he? Today, it felt like Roxas did most of my share of the mission for me.*

That fake Organisation member... I don't know his name. I don't know, but. But I wonder why it feels like I've seen his face before.

I wonder if my Keyblade... really is fake, like he said. Fake, sham, lie, failure... defective failure.

"...Xion... Xion!" Xion gave a start and looked up, at Roxas' voice. "What's wrong?"

"Sorry... I was just thinking..."

There are so many things I have to think about. Many, many things. Roxas

doesn't think, does he? About us, about Nobodies, about Kingdom Hearts... about the heart. Why is it this painful?

"Hey, Roxas."

"Hm?"

"Why are we doing this kind of thing?"

"Huh?" The smile disappeared from Roxas' face. Roxas seemed to think a little, and then he spoke. "Why...? So we can get hearts, of course."

His answer was like a textbook response.

"Are hearts really that important?" Xion asked.

"I dunno." Roxas tilted his head. "But, once we have hearts... We won't wonder why we did those things, anymore."

Yeah, Roxas' answer sounds like something he's been told, of course. With that answer, he doesn't have to wonder about anything. Stop thinking—that's that.

When we have hearts, everything will be resolved... really?

"...I don't get it," Xion muttered. Roxas looked at her with anxious eyes. "I wonder why I'm in the Organisation....?" She continued, looking down.

Why am I in this place? Why do I have to collect hearts with the Keyblade? A fake... Why do I care so much about what that guy said?

"I've been having nothing but weird dreams lately."

"Weird dreams?"

"I don't remember what kind of dream. Only that... it was scary."

Yeah... I've definitely had dreams about him, too. I feel like I've met him in my dreams. That guy... who is he? But, I don't remember a thing. I can't remember my dreams. It's painful. It feels like these gloomy things are always nesting in my chest... in my heart.

"Xigbar said that you and I are special Nobodies," said Roxas in a bright voice, and Xion looked up.

“Special...? That’s..... got something to do with me being a defective failure, hasn’t it...”

“That’s not what it means,” Roxas denied hurriedly.

Hey, what was with that denial? Roxas thinks I’m a defective failure too, doesn’t he? What on earth is meant to be special about me. That I can use a Keyblade? Even that...

“Even if you and I are both special, Roxas, we sure are different.” Xion stood up and stared at the sky.

“Xion.” Roxas took her hand. For an instant—she saw something.

Red... the sunset. Sky—

I remember. The never-ending road. Crossroads... and, the moon. The moon, floating in the. Sky—

“Let me go—” She shook her hand free from Roxas’.

“Xion!”

And then Xion left the usual spot without turning back.

xxx

In the end, Axel hadn’t been able to find any clues regarding the man who wore the Organisation’s coat—Riku.

“One ice cream please, missus.”

“Coming right up.”

Popping into the milkbar and buying an ice cream, Axel dragged himself towards the clock tower.

I wasn’t expecting to find Riku easily in the first place. I bet Saïx thought the same. But Saïx will probably pull that magnificently horrible face and have a nasty word or two to say if I state that ‘I couldn’t find him’, but then that’s Saïx’s ‘personality’. In short, Saïx pretending to be a human just involves just a whole lot of that kind of thing. It doesn’t mean that he himself is really feeling some kind of displeasure. That too is natural, seeing as he has no heart.

“This is so salty,” Axel muttered just like every time, biting his ice cream as he

climbed the slope that led to the station.

In any case... for Xion to have lost to Riku, that means that Riku and Xion made contact. I wonder if Riku saw Xion's face? If he did, maybe he felt something, seeing that face that looks so much like Naminé's.

Upon reaching the top of the clock tower, Axel could only see one person's back sitting there—Roxas.

Wasn't he working with Xion?

"Hey, Roxas."

Roxas turned, and his expression was somehow gloomy. "...Axel..."

"So Xion didn't come today, either?" Axel asked, pretending he knew nothing.

Roxas looked down. "She was here until just before, but..."

Looks like something happened.

Axel agonised for a second as to whether he should say something, but he decided not to ask. Whether he was obeying Saïx's words or not, Axel himself didn't know. *But—it still feels like I should say something now, that's all.*

Axel gnawed his ice cream beside the silent Roxas.

"...I'm going back now, too." Roxas stood up.

"What, you're leaving? After I went to the trouble of coming out here?"

"Haha... ha, um... I guess you're right, sorry." Roxas sat down again. Axel looked at him, chewing on his ice cream stick.

When his face is like that... I can't NOT get involved.

"Did something happen?"

"Not really..."

He's a bad liar. I can pick it straight away. But, I guess that isn't concrete proof that something did happen. Something must have happened that Roxas didn't understand the reason for either, thought Axel. An emotion somewhere in my memories.

"Girls are complicated, aren't they," muttered Axel, and Roxas looked up at

him, surprised.

“How did you know I was thinking about Xion?”

There’s something hilarious about him asking that with such a serious face. With just the evidence we have here lined up, no one would think that Roxas was thinking about anyone other than Xion.

“Cause you’re simple, Roxas... Well, all us Nobodies are simple, though.”

Without even snickering at what Axel half-meant as a joke, Roxas threw another question at him, seriously.

“Are humans complicated?”

Axel took a breath, and, smiling slightly, said, “They’re more complicated than Nobodies... but girls are even more complicated.”

“What about a girl Nobody like Xion?”

“I guess, simpler than a human but more complicated than a Nobody.”

Roxas tilted his head. “I don’t really get it.”

Well of course, seeing as I’m saying it this way so you won’t understand very well. “First of all, when it comes to girls, if you press the wrong button, you’re out. Got it memorised?” Axel said, smiling. He didn’t think this was a very serious matter—and he said it in a way so that Roxas wouldn’t, either.

“Maybe I... pressed the wrong button,” said Roxas, heaving a great sigh.

“...In that case, there’s nothing you can do but give her some time.”

“Why?” Roxas’ reply was slightly discontent.

“Most cases, you’ll make mistakes if you hurry this part. You’re wasting your time chasing after her,” Axel answered, and Roxas sighed again.

“...Okay, I’ll do that then.” Roxas hung his head in defeat.

He’s just like a human. Axel found this funny, and he laughed out loud. And then without thinking, he said, “You’re a good kid, Roxas.”

Roxas was ruffled, and he glared at Axel, pursing his lips. “Don’t treat me like a kid!”

The sight of this was even funnier, and Axel couldn't stop laughing.

"Don't laugh!"

Axel held back his laughter somehow. "It will be fine, Xion can take care of herself," he said, his mouth still twisted into a grin.

"I hope so, anyway," Roxas said, and he stared out at the sunset.

It will be fine—Xion can take care of herself.

xxx

Hey, who are you? Hey, do you know who I am?

Xion tossed and turned in bed.

Have I just woken from a dream? Or am I still dreaming? I don't know. I have to get up... But, my body feels heavy. I'll definitely be fine in a bit.

That reminds me, what was 'that' I saw yesterday? When I left Roxas... 'that'. A pitch black sky. But, I can't remember very well any more. Scenes from dreams... I don't really know if it's similar.

Okay, this time I have to get up. Okay... yeah, I'm in my bed, like always.

Today... I'm not allowed to lose.

xxx

Today I am investigating a world called Halloween Town. Roxas should have been here too, a few days ago.

This was actually the first time Axel had been to this world. It felt to him like this dusky world was well suited to members of the Organisation.

Axel glanced around as he destroyed Heartless.

It looked like there was a hidden passage over by a tombstone, but suddenly a ghost-shaped Heartless popped up, throwing Axel back onto the ground.

"Yow—!"

Axel threw a chakram after it.

What a pain in the ass. There's no sign of Riku on this world, either. Where the hell has he gotten to, anyway?

xxx

Roxas sat vaguely down on the clock tower, and ate an ice cream.

Axel hasn't come today, either. And I can't meet Xion.

"The wrong button, hm...", Roxas muttered, eating the ice cream.

"You're by yourself again today?"

"Yeah...", Roxas answered, without turning around. *I don't have to turn around to know who that voice belongs to.*

Axel sat down beside him, and began to eat an ice cream like Roxas.

This is... boring. Tedious. Is it because Xion isn't here?

Roxas sighed. Axel saw, and gave a small smile. "I've been busy, and it looks like they're keeping Xion busy too."

"...I know that, come on."

I wonder what my face looks like, Axel having said that.

"—Whatever..."

I'm making this face cause I want to, aren't I.

Roxas looked down.

The sunset in Twilight Town never changes. It never changes, but Xion isn't here.

Roxas stared vaguely out at the sinking sun.

xxx

Seeing a figure heading to the lobby, Axel paused for a second, then called out. "Xion!"

The figure stopped, then stiffened, unmoving. It didn't even turn around.

"Hey, it's been a while."

"Has it, now...", said Xion in a tiny voice, without looking Axel in the eye.

"It has, hasn't it? We haven't had ice cream together since I got back."

"—Oh, really... yeah, you're right."

“I’ve seen you from time to time in the lobby, though.”

“Yeah... I’m sorry, I’m in a hurry.”

Axel grabbed her arm as she went to leave. “Wait.”

“Let me go—”

As Xion tried to escape, her body shook, left only barely standing, thanks to Axel’s grip on her arm.

“Hey.”

Axel peered at her face, and it was sheet-white.

“Are you feeling unwell?”

Xion shook her head. “It’s nothing... I’m sorry.”

She hurried away.

Xion can take care of herself.

Realising the dangerousness of the words he’d said to Roxas, Axel chased after Xion.

“I said wait.”

He grabbed her arm again.

“I’m so sorry, let me go.”

“The fake Organisation member—”

Xion looked up. “You know about him?” Her eyes were wide.

“Everyone knows about him, if that’s all you mean.”

“...I guess you’re right...” She looked away, and hung her head.

Maybe she’s absorbed that everyone knows how she lost. Axel let go of Xion’s arm, and looked at her.

“Been going around investigating where he his.”

Xion’s gaze shot straight to him. “You have?”

“That’s right.” Axel let a beat pass before he spoke again. “His name is Riku.”

“...Riku...,” Xion murmured, lip trembling.

So she didn't know that name.

“Do you know what he is?”

Axel nodded. “...Yeah.”

“Do you know where he is?”

“No... not yet.”

“...I see.” Xion averted her gaze again.

“Xion, did something happen?”

“It's nothing! I just lost, that's all... to Riku.”

“That's not all, is it?”

“...That's all!”

She's probably lying. It's different to Roxas' bad lying, it's a more serious lie.

“Whatever, Xion. He's special. It's not weird that you lost.”

“Why do you know something like that?”

“That guy—”

“Hurry up and leave for your missions, you two.”

Someone was there to interrupt just as they had gotten to the heart of the matter. *No guesses as to who always interrupts at times like this—Saïx.*

“...Saïx...”

“Hurry up and leave.”

Xion run away exactly like she was escaping, and Axel reached his arm out after her, hands clasping on air. He breathed in, and Saïx spoke.

“I told you twice not to get too involved.”

“...That didn't mean I was getting all that involved.”

“What on earth are you doing, giving your information to that thing. It's meaningless.”

“Meaningless, you say—So then, why did you put Roxas and Xion together after she’d lost to Riku?”

Xion has gone strange because of the battle with Riku. After that battle, Saïx made Xion and Roxas have contact on purpose. And Xion and Roxas had trouble after that mission... Was that Saïx’s goal?

Saïx shook his head slightly. “I can’t answer at present.”

Axel snorted at his behaviour. “Again, you’ve changed—could I say?”

“No—Oh, that’s right. The way things are now, I think I need those two to make contact again. But, you telling Xion and Roxas about Riku is another thing entirely.”

“...I don’t get what you mean.”

“I mean to speak clearly. In any case, don’t get too involved. That’s all.”

Saïx left.

Axel breathed in, and watched him go.

xxx

His name is Riku. Riku is his name. I have to defeat him...

Xion brought the Keyblade down on a Heartless. It vanished, a little heart floating up from its body.

I don’t want to defeat these weak Heartless, I want to defeat him, who is much stronger.

Riku... there’s no way I can lose to Riku.

I have to get stronger than Riku, and then... and then?

I.....?

xxx

Today too, I couldn’t even feel a sign of Riku. I think that if I could find him, I could improve the situation a little.

On top of the clock tower as always, Axel noticed a presence behind his back, and biting his ice cream, called in the brightest voice he could muster, “Hey!

Good job, you must be tired.”

But Roxas sat down next to Axel in silence.

“...Xion is?”

“She still hasn’t come.”

“I see.” Roxas looked down.

“We have a problem, don’t we.”

Roxas shook his head.

“Xion can come or not, it’s her choice.

“Well, yeah, but...” *That doesn’t sound like something Roxas would normally say.*

The two of them began to eat, side by side. The sunset was pretty and red, as always.

“There’s something I want to ask,” Roxas said, about half-way through his ice cream.

“What’s wrong? Have you got some kind of trouble?”

“It’s about the world I went to today.”

Roxas tilted his head as if searching for words, and then he spoke.

“What is love?”

“Hah?”

“How is the power of love born?”

Roxas was dead serious.

Love... right?

“Love is a special power that only humans have.”

I don’t trust myself to explain this right. But I want to answer Roxas and Xion’s questions about ‘the human heart’ to my best extent.

“So Nobodies don’t have it?”

“You need a heart for it, see.”

“A heart...” Roxas was lost in thought.

Axel kept speaking. “There’s something only born between special people who are even more than friends... that’s love.”

“More than friends... So, best friends?”

“It’s a bit different than best friends...” Axel searched for words that Roxas could understand easily.

“You mean there’s a connection even higher than best friends?”

“It’s not about being higher or lower,” explained Axel, looking at Roxas. *Yep, looks like there’s no way I can explain this well.* “Oh well, we don’t have hearts. So it’s got nothing to do with us.”

“If we had hearts, would we be able to know it?” Roxas asked, doggedly.

“If we complete Kingdom Hearts, even you will be able to know it.”

Looks like those are the magic words. We’ll be able to know it if Kingdom Hearts is completed... really? No one has ever seen Kingdom Hearts complete before. But there’s nothing else for us but to believe.

The pitiful Heartless gather hearts....

“Kingdom Hearts...,” Roxas murmured, gazing at the sunset.

Axel looked at the profile of his face, and took a quiet breath.

xxx

Continue to [Chapter 5: Sleeping Xion](#)

Chapter 5: Sleeping Xion

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

Who's there?

I already know who you are. We meet every night in my dreams, don't we? I'm always dreaming dreams in which you appear.

You are... me? Me from my human time?

Me? Roxas? Mmm... No, who are you?

xxx

My mind feels sort of foggy.

Roxas shook his head slowly, and sat up in bed.

I remember that I was dreaming, but just like always, I can't remember what it was about. And, just like always, I don't feel like I slept properly. I wonder why I can't remember anything? I wonder if that's normal. I don't really know.

Roxas got out of bed, dressed, and left the room.

He entered the lobby like always, but then surprisingly, Luxord called out to him.

"How are you feeling today, Roxas?"

"Like usual..." We don't talk much normally, so I don't really know what I should say.

"It seems you and I have a mission together today. I trust you'll do your best, and so will I."

"Yeah." I'm pretty sure this is the first mission I've ever had with Luxord.

"Oh yeah, have you heard about Xion?"

At this sudden, unexpected question, Roxas looked up instinctively. About Xion?

"She failed a mission and is sleeping, I hear... Sometimes one does lose the game..."

"Xion...!"

Luxord seemed to be about to continue, but Roxas turned away without giving himself any time to listen, and ran out of the lobby.

This is the second time she's collapsed. Was she still unwell somehow? I'm uneasy. My chest hurts.

Just then, he was called to a halt. "Where do you think you're going, Roxas?" Roxas stopped, and turned. It was Saïx.

"To Xion," he replied, and Saïx narrowed his eyes very slightly.

"What do you plan to do about your mission?"

"I'll do it." Of course I will. I know what's what. But right now...

"Xion is sleeping now. Even if you go, you won't be able to do a thing for it."

Roxas didn't really understand. "Whether I can do anything or not isn't the question here!" Roxas' voice raised unthinkingly.

Why would Saïx say something like that? Maybe I can't do anything other than watch over her, but right now, I want to know how she is. Why doesn't Saïx understand that? There are so many things I want to say, but the words won't come out.

"Why are you so concerned about that failure?" asked Saïx in surprise.

"Failure? Are you talking about Xion!" Roxas pressed, glaring at Saïx.

"Whatever happens to that thing has nothing to do with you."

"Whether it's got something to do with me or not, I don't care," Roxas shot back, and Saïx shook his head slightly.

"Why worry about something that 'never was'?"

“‘Never was’? That’s the same for all of us!” Why doesn’t Saïx understand?

“Xion breaking down is not something you should care about.”

“I’ve had enough! It’s pointless for you to say any more. I’ll do my mission afterwards,” Roxas threw at Saïx, turning his back and running off again.

xxx

Getting his breathing under control, Roxas opened the door to Xion’s room. There was nothing but a bed and a closet in the room, just like Roxas’. But Xion’s room felt colder for some reason, and Roxas shivered. He drew closer to the bed, and called out to the sleeping Xion.

“Xion...”

There was no response. She was sleeping so quietly that Roxas wondered if she was even breathing. He held his hand in front of her mouth, uneasily.

Good, she’s breathing.

Roxas clenched the hand he’d put in front of Xion.

Why did Saïx say those things? Failure... defective failure. Whatever Saïx has towards Xion, it’s clearly different to me. I don’t really understand what he’s thinking.

Roxas thrust his hand into his coat pocket this time, and took out a shell. It was a shell he’d received from Xion. There were still many in his room.

This shell... is a promise. But, when did I make this promise with Xion? I told myself I was going to remember everything properly, but I can’t remember that at all.

Roxas left the shell by Xion’s pillow, and left the room, to go back to his mission.

xxx

Axel entered the lobby just before Roxas stepped into a dark corridor. Looks like he’s with Luxord. That’s a rare pairing.

Saïx was watching them leave. Axel called out to him.

“Hey, Saïx. About my mission for today—hey, you in a bad mood?”

Saïx’s face was twisted into a sour expression. “...Bad moods do not exist for Nobodies.”

“Well, yeah, I guess.” They certainly shouldn’t, seeing as we don’t have hearts and all, but when undesirable affairs come about, we show reactions according to the emotions in our memories. In any case, that wrinkle in his already scarred brow is making an appearance.

“Did something happen?”

“Xion has collapsed again.”

Axel frowned. That’s certainly an undesirable affair. “...Was Xion unwell or something?”

“No—it was just working a little too well until now—that defective failure was,” said Saïx, and his face went back to its usual expressionless state.

“...Defective failure, huh...”

I don’t understand why Saïx has such a low opinion of Xion. It’s certainly true that she was defeated by the fake Organisation member—Riku—but, I think that couldn’t be helped, seeing as it’s Riku.

Failing missions is unacceptable, but, I don’t know that she necessarily did that, either. She has the chance to fight him again, and perhaps the mission about that member was something they were unwilling to do.

Maybe Saïx himself shares some responsibility for it, seeing as he is the one in managing it, thought Axel. Saïx has something special in it for Xion...

“That doesn’t matter. Your mission is still to search for Riku.”

“Yep yep.”

“There will be trouble if you don’t hurry up and find him.”

“What I’m looking for won’t be found that easily, you know.”

“Hurry and go.”

“Kaaay,” answered Axel, walking away, but he turned his head to look back at Saïx. “Hey—Our plan’s going smoothly, right?”

“...If you don’t do anything stupid, yes.”

Axel shrugged at Saïx’s warning, and set out for his mission.

XXX

Finishing his mission and heading for the usual spot, he found Roxas still staring vaguely at the sunset as he ate an ice cream.

Narrowing his eyes for a moment against the dazzle of the setting sun, Axel crossed behind Roxas and sat in his place.

Roxas looked at Axel for a second, then went back to staring at the sunset. Then he said, without meeting Axel’s eyes, “About Xion...”

Axel put an arm around his knee, and looked at Roxas. “I heard from Saïx.”

Roxas looked down. “I wonder why Saïx hates Xion...”

Axel jolted slightly. For convenience sometimes we use the expressions ‘like’ and ‘hate’ to refer to things we’re good or bad at dealing with, but even so, the kind of ‘like’ and ‘hate’ that Roxas is talking about doesn’t exist for Nobodies.

“Why, you ask...,” Axel smiled. He couldn’t help it. “You’re always talking like a human, Roxas.”

At those words, Roxas finally turned his gaze on Axel. “This is ‘like a human’ then?” After asking, his gaze wavered, as if he were unsure. Then he looked down, just as if he were depressed. Roxas murmured, “I don’t really understand.”

Looks like for Roxas there’s a hell of a lot he doesn’t understand, Axel thought. There are heaps of things I don’t get either, but I’m better off than Roxas.

Axel lowered the leg he was clasping. “Are you that worried about Xion?”

“She was sleeping so quietly I could almost think she’ll never open her eyes again,” Roxas said in a small voice.

“Well, she’ll probably be okay.” That encouragement is all I can give.

Roxas closes his eyes for a second, then took a breath as if he were about to say something very important. Then the words spilled out. “Saïx called Xion a failure...”

Hearing that, Axel also sucked in a breath. I think maybe Saïx hasn't been paying attention to Roxas and Xion's 'specialness'. Yeah, those two un-Nobody-like Nobodies show emotional reactions that other Nobodies don't. Abuse them with cold words, and Roxas and Xion react to them—just like they have hearts.

But, I don't know whether they're only reacting unconsciously to things from when they were human, or whether this is something special that only happens because Roxas is the Nobody of the Hero.... and I can guess that Xion has some connection to the Hero, too.

Anyway, Saïx doesn't understand this. If we remember our time as a human, we can have some idea of what emotional reaction we should make even without a heart. It should be a big pain in the ass to worry about doing that.

Furthermore, I wonder if those two aren't influencing me too much, so to speak, thought Axel. Friends... Promises... Those words are controlling me.

It's just like my Nobody self is being rejected.

As a member of the Organisation, it's clearly of a different nature.

"I'm definitely more of a failure than Xion is," Axel confessed as if to himself, and looked at Roxas. Roxas just stayed looking down, as if lost in thought.

I'm much more of a failure than Roxas and Xion, who are loyal to their missions. No, not just missions—Saïx and I continue to betray the Organisation.

The huge bell on the clock tower rang out the time. A train was running, far away.

"...Maybe Saïx knows something about Xion. The reason why we are special Nobodies," said Roxas.

Saïx definitely knows. "If you're really hung up about it, I'll ask Saïx for you," Axel sighed.

A smile finally spread on Roxas' face. "Really?!"

That reaction definitely isn't very Nobody-like either. Axel shrugged with a wry smile. "Don't get so happy. Don't get your hopes up over my asking. I can't think that guy would answer easily."

"But, you definitely have more of a chance getting him to tell you than I

would,” Roxas said excitedly.

Yeah, Roxas definitely is a special Nobody. And Xion probably is too... “Well that’s true,” Axel hedged, gazing at the sunset. That red, same as always. When I was a human, and since I’ve become a Nobody, that same unchanging red.

“I don’t think Xion will wake soon...,” Roxas muttered.

Yeah, it would be good if she woke up soon. The three of us can talk about what we want to, and laugh, like before. That would be good...

xxx

As soon as he returned to the castle, he went to visit Saïx.

I want to ask Saïx about more than just Xion. Well, to be precise, there are heaps of things I have to speak to Saïx about, but I haven’t been speaking to him lately. It’s warped, thought Axel. Why am I trying to get Saïx to the top of the Organisation, I wonder....

“This is rare, isn’t it.”

“What do you mean?”

Saïx turned around in his chair. They were in Saïx’s room, deep in the castle. It could as well have been called his office. There was an enormous amount of data there.

“Lately it’s been rare that you would go out of your way to come to me, that’s what I mean.”

“I have something to ask you, for a change.”

“Hilarious,” said Saïx.

He’s being sarcastic... Joking, in other words.

Saïx had made up his mind not to say such things in front of the other Organisation members. It was something he could only be towards Axel, something special that could only have been born from the relationship Saïx and Axel had had as humans.

“Is it about the failure?”

Axel shrugged. “Mind reader, are we?”

"It's because you're simple, see... That hasn't changed."

"Simple—you're a rude bugger," Axel replied, sitting down on a shelf right opposite Saïx.

"Don't sit on that."

Axel swung his foot just like he did when sitting at 'the usual spot'. "Can't be helped, 's not like you have any other chairs."

"That's not the problem. In any case, I don't intend to speak about the failure."

"Failure, failure... You don't have to say it like that, do you?"

"I thought I told you not to get too involved." Saïx swung his chair, turning his back on Axel. Axel could feel nothing but a will of rejection from that back.

"I'm simply caught up in it. If there's something, please don't hide it from me, tell me." Axel got up off the shelf and put his hand on Saïx's shoulder from behind, peering into that face.

"Does that mean you'll tell me everything, without hiding anything?"

Axel's face twisted, then he smiled just a little. "'Same goes for you,' you're saying?"

It sure does feel like lately there are many things we haven't been telling each other... And, lately I've been talking to Roxas and Xion too much.

"Hey, Saïx..."

Saïx glanced up at Axel, then he brushed Axel's hand off his shoulder. "Xion does not qualify as an Organisation member."

Saïx' low-spoken words and rejecting manner made Axel move his body away.

She doesn't qualify as an Organisation member...? "What do you mean?" he asked, but Saïx didn't even turn.

"Just look at it. I won't say any more than that."

For Saïx to say that, he probably doesn't intend to tell me any more. Axel stared at Saïx' back. The two of us have definitely changed since those times.

"...I wonder which of us it was that changed," muttered Axel, and Saïx' shoulders trembled for just a second. Without waiting for an answer, Axel left the room.

xxx

Axel headed towards the lobby a little earlier than usual the next morning, and waited in the hallway for Roxas. Here, Saïx won't get in my way.

By and by, Roxas came walking towards the lobby with a sleepy face, just like always.

"Hey, Roxas."

Hearing the call, a happy expression flickered across Roxas' face for a moment, and he rushed over.

"Did you find out anything about Xion?" he asked, forcefully.

Axel nodded. "I asked Saïx."

"Really?! So did he know something about Xion after all?"

Roxas expression is so full of hope. But... "No—He didn't know anything," Axel stammered. I slept on what to tell Roxas, and I decided to lie. After all, if I told him exactly what Saïx said, he'd only have more questions.

Roxas hung his head. "Oh, really..."

The depressed figure he cut made Axel keep talking, unthinking. "But, he said he may as well take back what he said about her being a failure. As soon as she's working fine again, anyway." A lie is a lie, I guess, thought Axel, inwardly clucking his tongue, and said, "That's why until Xion wakes up, you have to do your best to do her part too."

Roxas' expression changed to a smile, and Axel's guilt grew even bigger. Anxiety flickered, as he wondered if he would have to lie even more after this.

"Got it! Thank you, Axel," Roxas said happily, and headed to the lobby with a spring in his step.

"Sorry, Roxas...", Axel muttered unconsciously, scratching his head as he watched Roxas go.

That day, Roxas was ordered to exterminate Heartless on a world he was visiting for the first time. He came down on a small island.

"This is Neverland...", Roxas murmured, looking around himself. Pretty much everything he could see was blue. It wasn't just the blue of the sky. It was the blue of the sea.

There was this weird smell, so Roxas sniffed as hard as he could. This smell. I can hear seabirds calling from far away.

Roxas began to walk. He saw a shadowy figure before him, and rushed to conceal himself behind a rock.

"Smee! Hurry up with that digging!!"

"Aye-aye, Captain Hook!"

Poking his head out to gauge the situation, Roxas saw the slightly fat, big-nosed old man that had been called Smee stab a shovel into the ground. Beside him stood a man with a superb moustache and a hat. It seemed that he was named Hook for some reason.

"We won't be mistaken this time! There should be treasure hidden right here!" Hook was clutching a handful of old scraps of paper.

"The last place we tried was a miss, to be sure... But how lucky was it to find all these treasure maps at once!" said Smee, digging a hole. It seemed that Hook was holding treasure maps.

"Heh heh heh... Some blockhead out there must have dropped them. Well, Smee! Keep digging!"

"Aye-aye, sir!"

Smee dug on, flinging soil, and then... he stopped moving. "Captain! Captain! It's here!"

"What?!"

Smee thrust a wooden chest high into the air. It was a treasure chest.

"Heh heh heh heh. Well then, I wonder what kind of treasure is inside?" Hook

opened the treasure chest, but—it was empty. “Blast! Another miss!!”

“Now, now, Captain. There are still plenty of treasure maps. If we search again with another map...”

“Uwurgle... Blast! If we don’t hurry and find it, someone else may snatch it away first!” There was a strange atmosphere. “I won’t hand over the treasure to anyone!” Hook stamped his feet.

At that moment, for just a second, a black fog hazed around Hook. What is that?

“Captain, sir?” called Smee, anxiously. It seemed he had noticed somehow, too. As if lured by the fog, Heartless appeared.

“Wargh!! Darn it! Heartless again!! Run, Smee!!”

“Yikes! A-aye-aye, sir!”

Smee and Hook came running towards where Roxas was hidden. Then, they ran right past, without noticing him.

It looks like I can defeat those Heartless without being found by those guys now. Roxas ran at the Heartless hanging around the treasure chest, and swung the Keyblade down.

xxx

A dream—yes, I’m dreaming. I definitely know this is a dream. So, relax?

xxx

If that’s what is happening, if I follow those guys, it looks like I’ll definitely be able to see Heartless.

Having defeated the Heartless, Roxas started walking in the direction Hook and Smee had taken. Just then, something tiny and sparkling appeared right before Roxas’ eyes.

“Wah?!”

The little thing was a winged woman about the size of his palm—Tinker Bell. Tinker Bell seemed about to escape, but after staring hard at Roxas’ face, she started flying round and round for some reason instead. By and by, she stopped

right in front of his eyes again.

“What...?”

Tinker Bell was gesturing wildly, as if trying to tell Roxas something. She spread both her arms wide, pointing at a ship floating on the sea.

“Are you telling me to go to that ship?” Roxas asked, and Tinker Bell nodded. However, Roxas had no means of getting out to the ocean. It seemed he couldn’t open a dark corridor either. “At that distance, I can’t get to the ship unless I could fly through the air or something...,” Roxas muttered unconsciously, and Tinker Bell started moving again.

“Hm?” Tinker Bell flew round and round Roxas, scattering dust made of light. “Wh-what is this? Sparkling...?”

Tinker Bell was pointing again, motioning to the bewildered Roxas.

That way looks like... a dead end. “You’re telling me to just jump off?!”

Tinker Bell nodded.

“You can’t mean... I can fly too?”

Tinker Bell nodded again in return.

“Got it. I trust you.”

Roxas stepped quietly up to the edge of a cliff. He dropped like a stone—and the instant he thought as much, his body floated lazily upwards. He could move freely.

“I flew! I’m, I’m flying!”

It was a strange sensation. A little similar to the sensation he’d had looking at the ocean just before—but a little different. It should be the first time he’d ever flown in the air, but it felt as though it weren’t.

Roxas span around once in the air, then came to a standstill. The glittering dust sparkled around him.

xxx

*You can definitely fly, I have faith!
Who was it who told me that?*

If we keep believing, we'll definitely meet again.

Who was it who promised me that?

Ah, I can hear the sound of waves.

Where is that sound coming from...?

I want to talk to you soon. See you, and talk to you. Then I can tell you so many things. But. But tell who?

Who am I thinking I want to talk to...?

xxx

Just as always, I wasn't able to find any information relating to news of Riku. I haven't even been able to find rumours. It's nough to make me wonder if maybe he's already gone somewhere we can't go. Is there any point to keeping up this idle searching?

Thinking such things, Axel finished up his investigation a little early, and headed for the usual spot. He should have been a bit early, but Roxas was already sitting there.

"You already finished your mission for today?"

"Yeah."

Roxas' expression is weirdly cheery. Is it just cause of this morning's exchange?

"Listen, Axel. Today, I flew."

Roxas was sounding a little crazy. "What do you mean?" Axel asked, critically.

"I don't really understand it really well but I was flying in the air."

Roxas is pretty worked up, and I don't really understand, but for now I'd better answer. "...That's pretty awesome." I sure haven't ever flown in the air before—but, Roxas' expression is full of life, enough to be strange, speaking about it.

"It felt so good, I just wanted to talk about it." Roxas gazed out into the distance, his fringe moving in the wind. "Flying in the sky gave me this kind of familiar—... that kind of feeling."

Familiar... That's the first time I've ever heard Roxas use that word.

Then Roxas said, "Xion... I wonder when she'll wake up...", and his excitement finally faded.

XXX

Who is calling me?

XXX

"Wahh?!"

That was Roxas there. But the one who was calling me... wasn't Roxas, was it.

"...M-morning. Xion."

"M-morning..."

When she'd opened her eyes and sat up, Xion had seen Roxas before her.

"Um... you woke up so quickly, you surprised me."

"S-sorry...", Xion apologised, looking away. She then saw the sea shells. "...You left these here for me, didn't you." She picked one up, and held it to her ear. Yeah... It feels like I was hearing it constantly, the sound of waves. Maybe it was coming from these?

"Can you hear it?"

"Yeah... I can hear the sound of waves." I wonder why. When I hear the sound of waves, why do I get this strange feeling. Xion opened the eyes she had closed for a moment, and asked Roxas, "How long was I asleep?"

"About twenty days, I think."

"That long?" That's a little surprising. To have slept for that long... And on top of that, why was I sleeping...? No, I don't really remember if I collapsed. The last memory I have is—Oh yeah, I was thinking about how I can't lose. I can't lose to Riku. But I wonder why I fainted?

"Yeah... You weren't waking up, and Axel and I were worried."

"I'm sorry for worrying you..." Roxas and Axel being worried about me makes my chest squeeze painfully, much more than the fact that I was sleeping for so

long.

"We aren't meant to have hearts, so I wonder how we can feel like this...", she murmured. I'm not meant to have a heart, so why does it hurt like this? But, there's definitely no answer to that.

She looked up. "Hey, I just remembered. What about your mission for today?" she asked Roxas.

"Huh? I was planning to go after this, but..."

"I want to go with you," she said, clearly. Roxas frowned, troubled.

"Don't you think you should rest a little longer?"

That may be a worry... But, I want to hurry up and get moving. "It's okay. Hey, take me with you."

Roxas hesitated for a moment, then accepted Xion's plea. "Okay, I got it."

Xion jumped right out of bed.

xxx

Let's persuade Saïx together, they decided together, and so Roxas and Xion called out and stopped Saïx just before he entered the lobby.

"Saïx!"

"So you've finally woken up," said Saïx, glancing at Xion. Xion looked up at Saïx. She took a small breath, and said, "I want to go out with Roxas on his mission. It's okay if the two of us do, right, Saïx?"

Saïx missed a beat, as if thinking for a moment about Xion's words. "It's better if you don't move around quite yet."

That's... not what I imagined he'd say. He's probably not actually worried or anything like that, but it does feel as if he's concerned about me physically.

Just as they were lost as to what to say, Axel appeared. "Oh, so you've finally woken up, Xion."

"Good morning, Axel." Xion smiled at Axel. Axel will definitely help us.

"Today, Axel, you and Roxas are scheduled to go together. Your companion

hasn't been put on the schedule." It seemed that Saix was also happy that Axel had arrived.

"I want to go too," complained Xion, desperately. "I want to stretch my muscles."

A moment of silence descended upon them, then, Axel opened his mouth. "What if I act as the guardian of these minors?" he said, trying to smooth things over. But, Saix stayed silent even in the face of those words.

Axel and Saix looked at each other. It felt as if they were glaring at each other a little, and Xion was anxious.

"I see. Do as you like," Saix folded, and went into the lobby straight away. The three of them watched his retreating back, then looked at each other, smiling.

It must be the first time the three of us have gone on a mission together.

xxx

The place they had headed to for their mission was Twilight Town. The usual town, where their usual spot was.

"Hee hee... It's kind of fun, having a mission the three of us," Xion smiled.

Roxas returned her smile. "It's the first time isn't it? The three of us, I mean."

"Hey hey, this isn't a game," Axel reproached them, jokingly.

That's right—missions aren't games. "I know. I just want to make sure I can move properly," said Xion, and Axel's expression turned serious.

"Don't push yourself too hard."

Xion nodded. "Okay." I won't push myself. If I were to faint again, it would be totally useless. But if I'm with Axel and Roxas, it will definitely be okay. If anything happens to me those two will help me, I have faith.

"Our mission is to put down a giant Heartless—Looks like a pretty tough Heartless, yanno," said Axel, scratching his head.

"Yeah—But thanks to that, we can narrow down the places it will appear. Maybe at the vacant lot, or in front of the station, I'm thinking," guessed Roxas.

"That's true," Xion agreed. There are big spaces at the tram plaza and in front

of the haunted mansion, too, but with huge Heartless, generally if we check those two places first, the odds of finding it there are high.

“Let’s hurry and finish, so we can go have some ice cream.” Roxas started walking

“Since we’re in Twilight Town, we can eat as soon as we’re done, can’t we,” said Xion, chasing after him.

“Yeah, that’s true, but... Don’t be careless,” Axel warned their backs as he followed behind.

“Axel is such a worry-wart, isn’t he.”

“Worry-wart—Maybe that’s cause you two worry me far too much.”

Xion and Roxas looked at each other, and laughed.

“So, where are you two heading off to anyway?”

“Station plaza,” Roxas replied.

“Because?”

“No matter what we do, we have to head back to the tram plaza to buy the ice cream, right?” Roxas explained.

“Huh?” Axel tilted his head.

“So, if we start with the station plaza, which is far away from the tram plaza, it’ll be easier later. Or that’s what I was thinking.”

“Roxas, you’re so smart!”

“Really...?”

Xion thought that Axel didn’t really seem to understand very well. But, the reason doesn’t really matter. Just the fact of being on a mission in this town all together is pretty fun.

But—the instant she set foot into the station plaza. The world—span. It span round and round and went black.

Is something happening? What’s wrong? I don’t understand.

—It’s a promise.

Who are you?

–It's my precious charm, so you have to bring it back to me.

Charm...? Is that, these shells...?

–Xion!

I can hear Roxas' voice. What on earth is happening?

xxx

Just before Xion fainted onto the ground, Axel caught her.

"Xion!" Roxas yelled, panicked. At that moment, something howled behind him.

It was the target Heartless. Roxas turned. Behind him, Axel picked Xion up. "Leave Xion to me," he yelled.

Roxas nodded. "Got it." His keyblade appeared in his hand, and he headed for the Heartless.

Keeping an eye on it, Axel dashed towards the corner of the station, a safe blind spot to the monster, holding Xion.

"Xion!" he called, after gently putting her down, but Xion didn't react.

I was careless. I don't have a clear answer as to why Xion faints so often in the first place. Why was she allowed to go on a mission in this condition? The thoughts floated up along with regret. Other than his warning not to get involved, Saïx has pretty much indicated that he doesn't intend to offer more information regarding Xion. In that case, I'll just have to find out on my own...

Just then, Xion stirred in his arms.

"Xion?"

At almost the exact same time, Axel could see Roxas dealing the last blow to the giant Heartless. A heart floated up from its' body, and was swallowed into the air.

And then—

"Sora...", Xion murmured.

Axel couldn't believe his ears. Sora...? Why would Xion know that name?

"Xion!"

Right afterwards, Roxas came running over, and peered into Xion's face.

"It's okay. She's not injured."

"But...!"

Silencing Roxas, who still seemed worried, Axel stood up with Xion in his arms.

"Let's RTC," he said in a strong voice to Roxas, and began walking.

xxx

Upon returning, the castle was as silent as the grave. Axel walked through the hallways, carrying Xion. Roxas walked beside him, pressing in close.

Xion's face was a limpid white. It was worrisome.

"So in the end it fainted again, the defective failure."

There's only one person who'd say something like that. Roxas turned in rage. "That's no way to speak about someone...!" he said, accusingly.

He lunged, and Axel, still holding Xion, restrained him. "Silence," Axel shot at Saïx, without even turning around.

I've never heard Axel speak in that cold voice.

Saïx said nothing in return.

Roxas glared at Saïx for a moment, then chased after Axel, who had started walking briskly away.

"Axel!"

"What."

"...Was it okay to have said that?"

"What do you mean."

Axel's tone is a little lower than usual. "I mean... you and Saïx are usually pretty close, aren't you?"

"Close, whatever. You're the one who went and flared up in the first place."

“Yeah, but...” It feels like some sort of mistake, for there to be a distance between Axel and Saïx like the one Saïx has between Xion and I. And even so...

“Look, open the door,” Axel said, stopping in front of Xion’s door, and indicating with his chin.

“Ah, yeah—”

Axel hurried to open the door, and there was Xion’s room, just as it was when they had left that morning. Axel gently lay Xion down on the bed.

Xion stirred a little. “Mm...”

It looks like she’s not unconscious.

Axel was staring hard at Xion.

Words slipped unthinkingly out of Roxas’ mouth. “...Axel, are you worried about Xion too?”

Axel looked at Roxas, slightly surprised. “Of course,” he replied in that low voice, the atmosphere since he had seen Saïx—the scary atmosphere—unchanged.

“Something feels weird.”

“What do you mean?”

Even asked, I don’t think I can explain what I’m feeling now very well at all. What do I do... “You hate troublesome things, right, Axel?” continued Roxas. That’s not exactly how I meant the words to feel—but, I can’t explain it right.

As he searched for words to continue with, Axel began to speak this time. “Well, Roxas—why do the three of us eat ice cream together every day in that place?”

“...Huh?” I don’t really get what he’s trying to say.

“I have no use in doing that either, do I? If you think about it, it’s troublesome, right?”

Certainly, if you think about it like that, it does sound troublesome. But... rather than troublesome of it, it’s fun to eat ice cream the three of us, so... so, that’s why we go there. But, I wonder why it’s fun?

“Do you want me to tell you?”

Roxas looked at Axel, and waited for his answer.

“It’s because we are best friends.”

That’s not what I was expecting him to say. Once, Axel said that he didn’t have a best friend. But, we’re best friends, that’s...

“Get that memorised, good and proper. We’re best friends.”

“Oh, okay... you’re right...”

Seeing a smile playing on Axel’s lips, Roxas began to smile too. Just then, they heard a small laugh. “Hee hee...” It was Xion, awake.

“Thank you... Axel,” said Xion, still lying on the bed. Axel scratched his head, seeming a little self-conscious.

“Are you okay now?”

Xion nodded, seeing Roxas’ worried state. “Just a little dizzy. I’m sorry for worrying you,” she replied.

“Don’t scare us like that, yeah?” Axel said, sounding tired.

“Okay,” Xion replied.

“Just take it easy for today,” Axel continued.

“Got it,” Xion said, obeying mildly.

“...The two of you, thank you.” A smile was on her lips. Axel and Roxas exchanged glances.

Surely—in this condition, she may take a while yet to recover, but it will be okay.

xxx

The white room was a little like the rooms in Castle Oblivion.

It was the first time she’d turned to her sketchbook since arriving at the mansion. Naminé drew slowly in the sketchbook. First she’d drawn a golden-haired boy wearing black. Then she’d drawn a red-haired youth. And then one more—a black-haired girl.

Naminé stopped drawing as she went to fill in the girl's face.

She—Yes, since when did I know she was there?

I realised recently that she is a special Nobody. But I don't really know much more than that. What on earth is she?

xxx

Continue to [Chapter 6: Tell a Lie](#)

Chapter 6: Tell a Lie

Written by: Kanemaki Tomoco

Original Plan: Nomura Tetsuya and Nojima Kazushige

Illustration: Amano Shiro

Translations: Goldpanner

Copyrighted by Disney, Square Enix and Touchstone Pictures. No profits are gained from these unofficial fan translations.

xxx

Xion definitely said ‘Sora’. Why does she know Sora’s name?

Axel returned to his room, deep in thought. If Xion had memories, and if, just as Axel had guessed, she was a being with some connection to Naminé—to Princess Kairi, then it wouldn’t be strange for her to know Sora’s name.

But Xion isn’t meant to have memories. If I were to at least believe Xion’s word, then she doesn’t have memories of her past. And, she shouldn’t have had a reason for her to lie about herself. So, perhaps Xion’s memories are returning. What on earth is hidden in her lost memories?

That reminds me, Saïx said that Xion was born at Castle Oblivion. But there were no traces of such a thing there. I wasn’t able to understand everything about that castle, but at least at this point in time, I haven’t been able to find anything like that. Of the facilities, the only thing left is the research facility Vexen left behind.

And, what I learned at Castle Oblivion is that memories are terrible vague things.

We Nobodies are controlled by our memories of our time as humans. And, what the Organisation was doing in that castle was rearranging the memories belonging to the human Keyblade Hero, Sora. Human memories are terribly weak things, and thanks to that, it feels possible for the fragments of their memories to be scattered. In the first place, Naminé’s power was necessary for that rewriting.

No, there was one exception.

That is the memory-copying doll that Vexen built in the castle's research facility—the Replica. That Replica was able to absorb Riku's memories without the need for Naminé's involvement. It was able to replicate even abilities at the same time as memories. Even more, actually; it was able to absorb Zexion's power, too.

There, Axel suddenly hit on a particular thought, and looked up. What did Saïx say?

Xion is a failure—a defective failure, who doesn't qualify as an Organisation member—

A chill ran down Axel's spine. It can't be, that can't be what it means. I need proof, Axel thought vehemently. This right now is still just a guess. Nothing more than my own delusion. I want to know the truth. The truth about Xion...

xxx

I remember. I haven't forgotten.

Lying in bed, Xion stared at the white ceiling.

It's still a little hazy. But, I remember. That is, the contents of my dreams. Somewhere where a blue ocean spreads out wide—everyone played there. Everyone... Not Axel and Roxas—my friends on the island.

Since I fainted yesterday, I feel as though I've suddenly remembered so many things.

Yeah, wasn't this what I dreamed of the whole time I was sleeping? And maybe these are memories. The memories that Roxas and I forgot.

But I still don't understand who I was. Even though I dream, and even though the memories are returning, I can't see who I was as a human.

I wonder who I was?

xxx

Without sleeping much, Axel headed for the lobby a little earlier than usual.

It would be good if I could negotiate about today's mission alone with Saïx.

Unless completely irregular, my missions lately have been to search for the fake Organisation member—Riku. Today should be the same.

For the Riku search mission, I've generally been able to choose where I search. Thanks to that, the range I'm allowed to act within isn't restricted. That means that I can also suggest how to find out about Riku.

I intend to make use of that.

On his way to the lobby Axel saw Saïx's figure, and called out. "Hey."

"...You're early, aren't you?" said Saïx, glancing over Axel.

"Am I scheduled for Riku hunting again today?"

"You are, but are you going to ask if you can go on missions together with Roxas again?" Saïx started walking towards the lobby.

Axel followed after him. "No, it's just that there's something about Riku I'm interested in. I want to check up on something, but I thought I'd just get your permission first."

"Hmph... Even without my permission, you'll go looking as you wish, won't you?"

"Well, I don't really want to go into Vexen's research room without having let someone know."

Saïx stopped walking. "What do you intend to check out?" he asked, eyes slightly narrowed, as if studying Axel.

"Riku, of course. Isn't it obvious," said Axel, shrugging. *I'm getting better and better at lying.*

"If it's Vexen's reports in Castle Oblivion that you're after, then I expect you have skimmed over all of them already."

"I just want to know something from before that. Maybe there will be some clues."

Saïx's gaze was fixed on Axel. "Fine. You have permission to enter the room. I'll send an underling with the key later."

"Thanks, man. This'll really help things go faster. Well then, that's what I'll be

doing for my mission today.”

Saix’s mouth twisted into a shape like a smile. “I wonder why you’re checking up on such trivial details, anyway?”

“...You’re right. Are you interested?”

“Do as you like,” said Saix, as Axel fluttered his hands around, and he left that place.

If another Organisation member had said the same thing, would Saix have given his permission? Axel wondered, vaguely. Does Saix still trust in me?

xxx

Roxas’ mission was at a world called Wonderland. It was the third time he’d visited this place. Just like the times before, the mission was to subjugate a specific Heartless with Luxord.

Upon setting down there, a white rabbit holding a watch ran right past Roxas and Luxord’s eyes.

“I’m late, I’m late, I’m very very late! I must hurry back and give my report! She’s sure to be angry. If I don’t rush, she’ll have my head!” The rabbit ran off deep into a corridor in quite a panic.

“I wonder what he was in such a panic for?” muttered Roxas, staring in the direction the white rabbit had disappeared off to.

Luxord smiled slightly. “A curious heart is an important element in carving one’s own fate. But, too curious, however, and one will drive oneself to ruin. Whether that white rabbit will bring you good luck or bad luck—”

“It’s not really that big a deal, right?” Roxas cut in. “Whether we chase that white rabbit or not, our mission to defeat Heartless stays the same, right?”

“Well—I wonder. So then, Roxas. How about we try chasing that white rabbit?” Luxord proposed, unexpectedly.

Roxas looked up at Luxord. “Huh? What about the mission?”

“Whether we chase that white rabbit or not, our mission stays the same, right?”

“Yeah, but...” I don’t really get what Luxord really has in mind.

“Let’s follow it, Roxas.” Luxord began to walk, and Roxas followed after him.

xxx

Vexen’s research room was filled with the unique air of a closed off room. Unlike Saix’s research room, lined with computers, an enormous number of files written on paper and in books were in piles.

“Kinda overwhelming...,” Axel muttered unconsciously, but the files were each properly titled, and Axel knew Vexen’s personality well, peculiarly precise like only a researcher could be.

Looking at a bookshelf, Axel picked up a few files. He spread them on top of a desk, pursuing with his eyes information on whether or not there was anything about Xion written there.

After many files, he reached one with the words ‘About Naminé’ written on it. He chased the letters. *What on earth is Naminé? And, what is her connection to Xion? Why was Xion born in Castle Oblivion?*

The answers to all his questions were written right there.

xxx

Thanks to chasing the white rabbit, they were able to find the target Heartless and exterminate it quickly.

“Your curious heart had the effect of making our mission easier, I see.”

“A curious heart carves one’s fate, wasn’t it...,” Roxas repeated. *Even if it seems completely unrelated at a glance, perhaps it is connected somehow. For example, if something interests you, then it’s not a bad thing to try and pursue it.*

But, Luxord kept speaking. *“That which will lead to your ruin will also be your curious heart.”*

What on earth is he talking about...

“Well then, let’s RTC.” Luxord opened a corridor. Stepping inside, Roxas kept thinking about Luxord’s words.

Xion sat vaguely on the clock tower, biting an ice cream.

Today's mission was easy, too.

Saïx always looks at me with cold eyes. Surely I'm not important to Saïx at all. My nose feels stuffed up somehow. Something's pinching behind my eyes and nose.

The me in my dreams seemed to be having fun, but why am I like this now?

"You're early today, aren't you?"

Xion turned at the sound of Roxas' voice.

"That's cause I had an easy mission."

Like always, Roxas passed behind her and sat next to her.

"How are you feeling?"

"...I think, I might be okay now."

"That's good." Roxas smiled, and started to eat his ice cream. The two of them sat side by side, eating ice cream. Cold, sweet and salty ice cream, just like always.

"Axel is?"

"Looks like he hasn't come yet."

Just then, the bell on the clock tower rang. The sun would sink soon.

"If he's this late, I don't think he'll be coming today." *We usually see Axel a little earlier than this.*

"Should we wait a little longer and see?" said Roxas.

Xion nodded. "...Yeah."

If the three of us didn't eat ice cream here like this, then by today I definitely would have been turned into a Dusk, and disappeared from this world, wouldn't I? It was thanks to Roxas that I became able to use the Keyblade again, and also because Axel talked to Saïx for me. And when I fainted not so long ago, the two of them saved me.

Xion took a small breath, and said, “You and Axel are always saving me, aren’t you?”

“I haven’t done a thing. Axel’s the one who’s said all those things to Saïx for us,” Roxas said.

Xion went to say, that’s not true, but she held her tongue. *If I say it, I know he’s just going to deny it.* Instead, Xion said, “...I’m so glad you two are in the Organisation for me.”

Then, they watched the sunset.

“I guess Axel isn’t coming...,” Roxas murmured.

xxx

Lately I’ve felt so refreshed after waking up, thought Roxas as he got ready for the day. I’ve stopped dreaming. And then, every day has been pretty fun. Yesterday was really fun, and I went over what I’ve written so far in my reports, and counted the days since I joined the Organisation.

It was fun, remembering things like what had happened, and what I’d done with Axel and Xion since I joined.

I don’t have any memories of my time as a human, but I think if I had them, it would definitely be this fun.

Roxas left his room and headed for the lobby.

My missions have been kinda fun, too. But, there is one thing troubling me. That is, lately not everyone has been coming to the clock tower after missions. That’s been happening for about ten days—Since I spoke with Xion after going to Wonderland, Xion and Axel haven’t been coming to the clock tower.

Hn, there are so many things I want to tell them.

Entering the lobby, Roxas found Axel there, surprisingly.

“Hey, Roxas.”

“—Morning, Axel.”

For some reason, Roxas didn’t quite know how to reply to this normal greeting.

“Today your mission is together,” Saïx ordered straight away.

“....And Xion?” Roxas asked Axel, in a small voice.

“Already left,” he replied.

“Oh, I see.”

“Come on, let’s go.”

“Uh, where?”

“To Neverland.” Axel entered a corridor, and Roxas hurried after him.

“It’s been a while, hasn’t it?” Roxas began, as they walked along the corridor.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, talking with you like this.”

Axel scratched his head, tilting it to one side. “Has it now?”

“Yeah, it has. You haven’t been coming to the usual spot, that’s why.”

“Aaaah, my bad my bad. I’ve been a bit busy, that’s all,” Axel answered, and that moment, the exit came into view. Neverland—the world with the sprawling ocean.

xxx

It hurts.

Xion swing the Keyblade down, and defeated a Heartless. Though they were the kind of Heartless she’d been destroying in one blow up until now, Xion was panting heavily and leaning on the Keyblade.

For so many days now I’ve been dreaming every night, and it feels like I haven’t slept at all. It’s like there’s this world, and that world. That world—the world in my dreams. The me in my dreams seems to be having so much fun. That’s why for me here, it’s the opposite, and every day is deathly tiring.

And then, since I haven’t been sleeping, I’m not moving well. I want to sleep for even just the tiniest wink. That’s why I haven’t been going to the clock tower. While I’m awake, I think it’s bad the entire time. But, if I sleep, I dream.

Whether Saïx knows this or not, my missions have continued to be easy. But sometimes I’m not able to perform even these easy missions well.

Maybe things would change if I talked to Axel and Roxas. That reminds me, there are things I want to ask Axel, too. Yesterday the place I dreamed of was probably Castle Oblivion. And Axel was there, too... or that's how it felt. I don't know if I'm allowed to ask about it.

I'm so, so uneasy. But, it's definitely too late for there to be things I can't ask. Maybe I'll go to the usual spot today and see...

xxx

Drawing the scent of the salt water deep into his lungs, Axel turned to Roxas, who had followed behind.

"Oh yeah, wasn't this the world? The one where you said you 'flew'?"

"Yeah, I really can fly! Axel, watch!"

Smiling with his whole face, Roxas kicked off the ground. But—he just jumped.

"What the...?"

He kicked off again. But, he got the same result.

Axel, who had been in a depressed mood as he wondered what kind of face to put on for Xion if he saw her, blew out a breath of laughter unconsciously.

"What are you doing, Roxas?"

"That's weird... I could fly before."

Roxas kicked at the ground desperately, and Axel suddenly couldn't stop laughing. *I can see now that what I was thinking was stupid. Nothing can happen if you do nothing but think. I should have known this. I wonder why I wasn't able to move. Just like a human.*

Just then, they heard a shout. "What's happening!" The man seemed angry. "We dig and dig, but we find nothing but junk! To make things worse, more Heartless came out, too!"

Beside the cranky man stood a worried looking old person.

"Blast it all! I've lost my mind!"

The man began to walk, and the old man followed after in a flurry.

“Captain, where to?”

“We’re returning to the ship!”

And just like that, the two of them left.

“What’s with those guys?” Axel murmured.

“I don’t know much, but when I saw them in my mission before, they were saying something about treasure maps,” Roxas answered.

“Treasure maps, huh... they on a treasure hunt or something?”

“They dug a hole, and a Heartless appeared.”

“So, you mean there was a Heartless in the hole they dug?”

“Maybe, maybe not.”

“What’s with you? Be a little clearer.”

“In the hole was a wooden chest with junk in it.”

“So, maybe the wooden chests have some kind of connection to the Heartless?”

“Maybe...,” said Roxas, thinking.

It’s just so unclear... or rather, so not straightforward. There are these things that seem like treasure maps, and if you follow them and dig a hole in the ground you’ll find a wooden chest, and then Heartless appear from those wooden chests. Have I got it right?

“Okay, first we’ll go check out the hole those guys dug.”

“Yeah, good idea.”

Axel started walking towards where the man and the old man had been standing.

xxx

Something sparkling flew around the hole.

“You’re...” *the fairy I met earlier. Tinker Bell.*

“Hey, Roxas, what is this?!” Axel asked, scratching his head. Tinker Bell hid

behind Roxas, as if frightened.

“I don’t really know either, but I met her on my last mission. She’s not our enemy.”

Axel peered behind Roxas, and Tinker Bell turned her back on him in discontent.

“And, it was thanks to her that I was able to fly through the air.”

“Fly... through the air?”

“Yeah.” Roxas turned around to face Tinker Bell, speaking to her. “I want to fly again. Please, put some of that shiny dust on us again?”

Tinker Bell seemed to be thinking about it for a moment, but she finally flew round and round Axel and Roxas. From her body, dust made of light came sprinkling down on Axel and Roxas. And then—Roxas’ body went floating up into the air.

“Wahh?!” Axel yelled in surprise.

“See? Just like I said, right?” He flew higher into the air, looking down at Axel.

“Roxas, how are you flying like that?”

“I don’t know the technicalities, but if you have some of that shiny dust on you, and you think “I can fly,” then you can fly.”

“That’s all?”

“Yeah, that’s all,” said Roxas, spinning once.

“You give It a go too, Axel.”

“O... okay...,” said Axel, but he stayed there like that, furrowing his brow in thought.

“What are you doing, Axel.”

“Looks like... it’s no good...,” Axel shrugged.

“No way. Trust me!”

“...I trust you.” Axel closed his eyes. And then—he was bobbing in the air. “I-I’m flying...,” he said.

“See? You can fly!”

It felt uneasily unsteady, but Axel really was flying in the air.

“Awesome!”

“See? It’s awesome, right?”

The two of them flew around for a while, testing things out, but then Tink came over to them. She was pointing in the direction that the guys from before—Hook and Smee—had gone, in the direction of the pirate ship.

“Are you telling us that they went to the ship?” Roxas asked, and Tink nodded.

“So those guys from before got onto the ship, right? Are you, by any chance... a buddy of theirs?” Axel asked. Tink puffed her cheeks out. She seemed pretty angry.

Just then, there was a loud noise and something came flying past.

“Wahh?!”

It was clearly a dangerous object—a cannonball. The cannons were firing from the pirate ship. More and more cannonballs came sailing over.

“Are they attacking us?” asked Roxas, dodging a cannonball.

“Nah, they’re mistaking us for Heartless, aren’t they?” Axel replied, as Tink pointed at the ship. She went flying over in that direction.

“Hey, wait!” Roxas called, and went to chase after her in a panic, but Axel grabbed his shoulder.

“Wait, Roxas. It’s too dangerous to go near that ship right now.”

“But—”

Roxas couldn’t help being worried about Tink, who had flown away. But then, right in front of their eyes, their target, a flying Heartless, appeared.

“Also, our mission takes priority. Anyway, the little missy is so tiny she won’t get hit, right?”

“...Got it,” Roxas nodded reluctantly.

“Don’t go zoning out and getting hit by cannonballs, okay?”

“You too.”

Axel threw a chakram at the Heartless. Roxas also aimed at it, and swung the Keyblade down. But, the Heartless dodged in a slippery manner. Just as he went to chase it, a cannonball zipped in front of Roxas, cutting him off.

“Wahh!” Roxas lost his balance.

Axel, perfectly used to flying by now, grabbed his arm. “I thought I told you to be careful!”

“Let’s go.” Just like that, the two of them chased the Heartless out over the sea.

The Heartless aren’t all that tough. But, the cannonballs are making this another story.

Axel shot flames and set the Heartless on fire, and in that unguarded moment, Roxas swung the Keyblade down on it. It was a disappointingly easy victory.

“Mission completed,” said Roxas, watching the heart float up into the air.

“How many times are they gonna shoot those things before they’re satisfied...,” muttered Axel. They’d managed to defeat the Heartless, but the cannonballs showed no sign of stopping.

“I wonder... if she’s okay.” Roxas stared at the pirate ship.

“Hm? You mean that little lady?”

“It really would have been better to follow her.”

However, with the cannonballs firing, there was no way to get close to the ship.

“It doesn’t look like this is going to let up—and it’s too dangerous to try going close to the ship in the middle of that, and most things to do with the worlds are banned, right? Let’s leave things here for now.”

Well, if Axel says so then there’s nothing to be done. But, it’s thanks to her that we’re able to fly through the air like this. If she’s in some kind of trouble, then I want to do as much as I can to help.

“Don’t be getting down about it. Little miss will be fine.”

“I guess... so.”

“Anyway, let’s RTC,” said Axel, and Roxas nodded. There was nothing to be done.

XXX

Spending time alone with Roxas was so comfortable and easy. I don’t really want to think about Xion right now.

Axel was holding an ice cream in one hand, and laughing together with Roxas at the usual spot.

“I guess that shiny dust wouldn’t work on other worlds.”

“I wonder, now...” The experience of flying was definitely special. I totally understand why Roxas was so worked up.

“You two are early,” said Xion, appearing.

“You’re late, Xion!” Roxas called, in a merry voice. Axel averted his gaze from Xion unconsciously.

I’m uneasy.

Xion sat down beside Roxas. “I’m sorry, it took a little longer than I’d thought.”

“Oh yeah, I almost forgot to tell you. Xion, we flew in the air today!” Roxas began talking to Xion, still worked up. “There was this sparkly, shiny dust, see, and if you get it on you then you can fly!”

Xion gave a small sigh. “It’s nice you two seemed to have such a great time.”

“It’d be nice if you could come too next time, Xion. That world—has an ocean.”

“The ocean...,” Xion murmured, looking down. “If you like the ocean, there’s this world I went to before that had a very pretty ocean too. Destiny Islands...”

“The ocean is nice, isn’t it. The sound of waves and the like.”

“Yeah.”

Roxas was still in an excited mood.

“Am I... in the way here?”

“Xion, what are you saying?” Roxas said, and Xion looked down.

The other two noticed that Xion seemed off, and an oppressive atmosphere descended upon them.

“...Hey, Axel,” Xion called, in a small voice.

“What?”

“Axel, you’ve been to Castle Oblivion, haven’t you?”

Axel nodded, even as he mulled the question over. *I wasn’t expecting that. Does she know something?*

“What on earth is over there?”

“The Organisation’s research facilities, that’s all that’s there,” Axel answered, frankly. Xion’s expression showed that she was clearly at a loss.

“Research facilities...? People get sent there all the time, don’t they. Especially you, Axel,” said Roxas, as if trying to help the silent Xion out.

“But, we haven’t gone there,” said Xion.

“I’d say that’s cause there’s no reason for you to go,” answered Axel, right away.

Silence descended upon them again.

The bell of the clock tower began to rang, and Xion took the opportunity to stand up. “I’m going back now.”

“Huh?” said Roxas, and at that very moment, Xion’s body swayed dizzily.

Then, just like that, her foot slipped off the side of the clock tower.

“Xion!”

Roxas threw his hand out to grab hers.

xxx

Memory. My first memory. Saïx leading me by the hand, out of Castle Oblivion.

“You probably won’t come back here again—Xion.”

Yeah, it was definitely Saïx who said that. And, that place was—definitely Castle Oblivion.

XXX

Roxas clung for dear life to Xion's hand. And, Axel held onto Roxas' body, supporting him.

"Are you okay?!"

"...I'm okay..." answered Xion in a small voice, as Roxas held her there with one arm.

Roxas dragged her body up. "You're feeling unwell again, aren't you?" he said worriedly, his panting breaths subsiding.

Xion stayed sitting on the ground. "No... it's nothing like that," she answered, hanging her head.

Roxas didn't know what to say, and he just stared at Xion.

"Oh yeah!" Axel suddenly shouted.

"What's with you, all of a sudden."

"Next time we get a holiday, how about the three of us go to the beach?" Axel said, smiling.

"...The beach? Where's this coming from, out of the blue?" Xion asked, still looking down.

"It'd be nice to go have some fun together, wouldn't it?"

It's pretty rare for Axel to make a proposal like this. But, I know for sure that Axel is thinking that things with Xion look pretty serious.

Thinking such thoughts, Roxas gave his own bright reply. "You mean, friends spending the holiday together?"

"Yeah, yeah!" Axel said, invitingly.

This tone is just like the conversation that the two of us shared just before Xion got here. It's fine to include her, I think.

But.

“...I wonder if I could actually go,” Xion said in a small voice.

“What are you talking about, Xion?” Roxas said.

“Let’s have a blast, Xion,” Axel added.

Xion looked up from her lap, and smiled slightly. “Yeah... I guess so... Let’s do it,” she finally agreed.

Axel and Roxas looked at each other.

“If we’re going to the beach...,” Axel began.

“Then fried noodles is a given, right?” said Roxas.

“And then watermelon?” said Xion, replying in turn.

They looked at each other and laughed. The setting sun shone down on the three of them, just as always.

xxx

Naminé and DiZ gazed up at the pod. The room, kept at a certain fixed temperature, should rightfully have had a comfortable atmosphere, but, it was filled with a heavy air.

“It doesn’t look like it’s going well,” DiZ said, and Naminé looked down.

“I think it’s the influence of a Nobody...”

“A Nobody...?” DiZ said, disgustedly.

Naminé continued without looking up. “No matter how many fragments of memory I connect, if memories flow outside, not all of the memories will go back. And if the memories that flowed out connect to other memories, wherever they are, they won’t be able to come back at all...”

Sora’s memories are flowing outside. If they were only flowing into his Nobody, it would be fine. But they’re flowing even further than his Nobody, into a place we didn’t imagine. Maybe that’s our punishment for toying with memories in the first place.

“I doubt it will be a problem if he’s missing a few memories.”

“If they are a vital key to his awakening, then it will.”

“Key—Witch, you manipulate the memories of Sora and those connected to Sora... Naminé, can you see something?”

Naminé looked up, and gazed at Sora, sleeping inside the pod.

“If they connect with other memories, then she definitely won’t be able to bear it...”

“She?” DiZ asked.

Naminé shook her head slowly. *She definitely... won’t be able to bear it.*

xxx

I don’t even know where Castle Oblivion is. But, the only thing I know is that I came from that place. If that’s true, then there’s nothing but for me to find out for myself.

Xion was inside Saïx’s research room. She just knew how to use a computer. Typing on the keyboard, many pieces of information showed up on the screen.

It’s not like what I want to know is all that important. I wouldn’t expect it to be protected. What I want to know is how to get to Castle Oblivion.

“Not that...” She tapped on the keyboard.

“Not this either... Ah!”

The Nobody symbol appeared on the monitor, and the location of the castle. It showed that the castle was in the realm of in-between. Xion memorised the information on the screen, and left Saïx’s room.

xxx

“Wake up.”

“...Let me sleep a little longer...,” Axel replied, without opening his eyes.

“I’m telling you to wake up.”

The displeased-sounding voice made Axel open his eyes. “What are you doing in here?”

Standing beside his bed was Saïx, a disagreeable look on his face.

I haven’t been woken up like this since I’ve become a Nobody.

“Xion has left the castle.”

“...She did...?” Axel sat up. *For Saïx to go and phrase it like that, ‘left the castle,’ it can only mean that Xion has run away from the Organisation. Xion...*

Axel got out of bed, and started getting ready.

“That was a quick reaction.”

“You’re sending me after her, aren’t you?” said Axel, stretching himself thoroughly. *Most of my predictions stick.*

“Good guess. Xion has probably headed for Castle Oblivion.”

“...What would that mean?”

“You’re the one who knows the most about Xion, aren’t you? You looked into it yourself, didn’t you?” Axel remained silent until Saïx continued. “What Xion chooses to do has nothing to do with us. However, if the facilities in that castle are used, then we have a problem. Dispose of the facilities. That’s the only order from me. After that, do what you like.”

Axel nodded and left the room.

xxx

My head hurts. Xion looked up at the strangely-shaped castle. *No... it’s like someone is calling to me. Something is resonating directly inside my head. I’m scared to open the doors of the castle. And whatever lies on the other side of the doors... also scares me.*

Despite this, Xion pushed open the huge doors. It opened onto a cold room made of white stone that was very similar to the Castle that Never Was.

But, there’s something different about the air here.

Halfway down a hallway, the pain in Xion’s head got stronger, and she fell to her knees.

The answer is definitely just beyond this point and everything...

Just then, the sound of footsteps echoed around, and Xion turned.

The familiar sight of her red haired friend was standing there. “Axel... Why are you here...”

He looked troubled, scratching his head and looking down at Xion. “I just happened to be ordered here, that’s all. There’s nothing here anymore.”

“Liar! The secret of my birth is here, I know it,” Xion screamed.

Axel shook his head. “You can’t just go doing what you want.” His words were calm.

“If I oppose orders, I’ll be turned into a dusk... that’s what you mean, right?”

“It wouldn’t be so bad if they only turned you into a dusk—they’ll destroy you,” he said, coldly, and Xion’s chest ached.

“Because I’m... useless?” she muttered, looking down.

“No,” said Axel, shaking his head. He grabbed her arm and pulled her to her feet.

“We’re going home, Xion.”

This time Xion was the one to shake her head. *What do I do? I know Axel would understand if I told him. But, I don’t know what to say. I’m searching for words. But the right ones aren’t coming.*

“One by one, my human memories are returning.”

“Whether you remember those things or not, it doesn’t mean anything,” said Axel, immediately dismissing the words she’d tried so desperately to put together.

“Every night I dream! You’re in them too, you know?”

“I can’t be in memories from your past. Those are just normal dreams.”

Why is he being so dismissive?

“No they aren’t!” Xion screamed. “I met you here in this castle, didn’t I, Axel?”

“We never met.” Axel grabbed Xion’s shoulder, and stared into her face.

“We’re going home, Xion. Roxas is waiting.”

Xion shook Axel’s arm off. “Please, Axel. I want to know! Who I am—” *I want to know so badly.*

Xion ran.

“Stop! Don’t go, Xion!” Axel chased her.

Xion opened a door. On the other side of it was—a room made from Xion’s ‘memories’.

And, planted firmly in front of Axel was a black coated man, Riku.

xxx

I... wasn’t... me?

xxx

With his back to the closed door, Riku stared hard at Axel.

Nah, maybe I’m wrong and he’s not staring at me. Both his eyes are covered by that black cloth.

“—Riku,” Axel muttered, gripping his chakrams.

Not even a year has passed since I last saw his figure. But, Riku seems to have grown into what looks like a whole new person.

“Let her do what she likes.”

“What do you know about Xion?” Axel asked back.

“Xion, is it... I have no intention of fighting you here.”

“Well I do!” Axel threw a chakram. But, Riku dodged it swiftly.

“I thought I told you I didn’t intend to fight?”

“What do you intend to do with Xion?”

Riku didn’t respond. He simply melted away into the darkness and vanished.

xxx

In the round room, Saïx continued informing Xemnas and Xigbar of Xion’s escape.

“Last night on short notice, I sent Axel over to Castle Oblivion. He is proceeding with the matter from before. At the same time, I am making him dispose of the facilities. He should RTC soon.”

After Saïx’s information, Xemnas asked something unexpected. “What of

Naminé's whereabouts?"

Why is he asking about not Xion, but Naminé? "We still don't know," replied Saïx, as he tried to figure out what Xemnas' true motivations were.

"Haha! Where could she have gotten to I wonder," Xigbar butted in, teasing.

"Xigbar... You've gotten hold of something, haven't you?"

Saïx found Xigbar's true motivations much harder to grasp than Xemnas', which displeased him.

"...Continue the report," Xemnas said.

"There were traces of someone suspiciously accessing the main computer."

"You're saying you know who accessed it though, anyway." This time Xigbar was pressing. Saïx stayed silent, and a sharp grin twisted Xigbar's mouth.

"Poppet is getting more and more similar."

Poppet...? He must mean Xion. But the puppet hasn't changed. I can think he's putting deeper meaning in his words on purpose, but I don't have time to go along with it.

"What are you talking about? That thing is only doing exactly what we would want it to."

But, Xigbar only laughed at Saïx's answer. "Haha! I see, so that's how it is."

"Is something funny?"

"Guess guys without hearts really are different," said Xigbar, laughing.

None of us have hearts—Saïx went to say, but Xemnas opened his mouth.

"No matter what has happened, our plans won't change. Axel, Roxas, and Xion. They are behaving according to the will of Kingdom Hearts."

"But, Xion is—"

Of all the members in the Organisation, Saïx was the only one who held doubts about the plan of Xion.

"Leave it be. Can't you see how perfect this is?" Xemnas said, and Saïx looked away.

I can't understand what he's talking about.

"It seems that it will still take some time before Xion comes close to the original goal. It's not necessary for us to do anything. We will just pay close attention and watch over things."

Saïx hesitated over Xemnas' words. *What on earth—does he mean?*

xxx

Watching the sunset and eating ice cream in the usual spot, just like usual, after finishing a mission that went just like usual. Lately, the repetitiveness hasn't felt so bad, thought Roxas, narrowing his eyes against the glare of the setting sun.

"You're early."

Turning at the sound of the voice, a grin surfaced on Roxas' face. "You're just late, Axel," he said.

The setting sun shone on the two of them.

"It's 255 days today...", Roxas murmured.

Axel tilted his head. "What is?"

"Today makes 255 days since I joined the Organisation. Time's flown surprisingly fast."

"You've been memorising the number of days?"

"I didn't have any memories up until joining the Organisation, and I was zoned out for the first few days, so I wanted to properly remember everything after that." *To tell the truth, I really only know because I recently went and re-read all my reports.*

Axel looked deeply into Roxas' face, then he laughed. "For about the first week, even your words were clumsy. Well, you still zone out all the time even now!"

"You're terrible!" Roxas said, and then the two of them laughed. Then, they looked out at the sunset.

It's tense and suffocating sitting in silence with anyone else, but with Axel and

Xion, it doesn't bother me at all, thought Roxas. I can feel safe with them sitting silently beside me—that's probably because, no, definitely because they're my best friends. Together or not together, speaking or not speaking, it's okay.

"Hey, Roxas—"

"Yeah?"

Axel's face was dyed by the setting sun. His red hair looked even redder.

"Do you know why the sunset is red?" Axel looked at Roxas. "There are many colours that make up light, and out of all of them, red is the one that travels the furthest."

Roxas laughed. "Why do you look so smug about it?" He shoved him, and Axel gave another little laugh.

There's something weird about Axel today. I don't really know what it is, though. But, that was fun too, and Roxas began to laugh out loud. *It would be nice if Xion got here soon, though.*

"Anyway, she's late...," murmured Roxas, unconsciously.

"I don't think... Xion will come today," said Axel.

"Did she faint again?" *I'm uneasy. Xion hasn't been feeling well lately. I wonder why...*

"Nahh, I hear she's been sent on an important mission. Awesome, huh!"

There's something forced about Axel's tone. I think he could be saying this so I won't worry. Roxas let out a small sigh. "When will she be coming back?" he asked.

"Depends how hard she works now, doesn't it?"

Roxas stared out at the sunset, biting his ice cream.

"Oh... I guess we won't get a holiday soon, then... If we did, the three of us could go to the beach, though."

We promised Xion.

The sunset shone on Roxas.

XXX

Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days: Vol 2. Go to the Sea Complete! The series is continued in Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days: Vol 3. Xion—Seven Days